

VIDEO AGE

international

In This Issue:

MIP's Comin'
German Drama
Studios Go EST
Funny Canadians

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WGA's Patric M. Verrone Assesses The Writers' Strike

BY ERIN SOMERS

"Pilot season is [the networks'] research and development, and drastically reducing it would be a self-defeating move." This was a statement made by Patric M. Verrone, president of the Writers Guild of America (WGA) West, regarding the negotiating tactics used during the Hollywood writers' strike, which finally ended in February.

The writers' union is divided into the New York City-based WGA East representing 3,770 members and headed by Michael Winship, and Los Angeles' WGA West with 7,627 members. The WGA struck against the U.S. Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), which basically represents the interests of the studios — even though its official membership encompasses some

(Continued on Page 58)



WGA President Patric M. Verrone

L.A. Screenings in Dollars & Sense For Los Angeles

BY DOM SERAFINI

Much attention has been paid to the fact that Los Angeles lost up to \$23 million a day during the Hollywood writers' strike. During those trying times, consideration was also given to the L.A. Screenings — would the studios hold them or not?

If the studios opted to cancel or even postpone the L.A. Screenings, the strategic consequence would have been to reinforce the role of MIP-TV (and indeed the market organizer was readying for such an eventuality) and to change

the start of the market calendar year, which traditionally starts with the L.A. Screenings and ends with MIP-TV.

Naturally, the studios would not have made such a decision unilaterally, since

(Continued on Page 52)

Africa: TV's Last Frontier. DISCOP Africa Is Ready

BY DAVID SHORT

There's a country that's more than twice the size of California with a GDP of \$300 billion, has one of the largest oil reserves in the world, and has a population of 135 million who own over 32 million mobile phones, but has only three TV stations — two of which are state-owned. Can you guess where it is?

(Continued on Page 56)

Murdoch Flock Builds Biz Blocks

BY BOB JENKINS

For a man who has been married three times and changed nationality once, Rupert Murdoch seems strangely keen on dynasty. And with a brood of six children, one might be forgiven for thinking that founding one would be a piece of cake: as simple as founding the News Corp media empire. But, as in the eponymous soap opera, dynasty, it seems, can be a tricky thing.

In fairness to Rupert, it has to be said that, although strictly true that there is a field of six, it is one that can swiftly be narrowed to three. Prudence, his daughter from marriage number one, has always eschewed the limelight, and shown little interest in the family's media empire, and two more of the offspring are the result of his third union, of just nine years, with Wendi Deng, and so are a tad young to be vying for senior positions in the world of media. Which leaves Lachlan, Elisabeth and James, the fruit of his middle marriage to Anna. And for years, many have speculated as to which Rupert would anoint as his successor.

(Continued on Page 50)

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CONTENTS

VIDEO AGE • No. 2 • March / April 2008

Cover stories:

An Italian-American quakes Hollywood: WGA's Patric M. Verrone Assesses the Writers' Strike.

L.A. Screenings is more than moneymaking appointments for the studios. For Los Angeles, it also means *mucho dinero*.

Africa is television's last frontier and DISCOP Africa is ready to prove it.

Murdoch family values: Pay one and get a total of four — but not for free.

4. World. California, Italy, Japan, UAE.

12. Book review. Star power in Hollywood's Golden Age. Compare it with today's age.



14. Company profile. CinemaVault is big on the fact that it likes to be small.

16. Canada's funny bone. But to tickle it, one has to go south.

18. Ethnic TV — no longer dirty words.

20. Euros to make dollars see green.

22. Farrell Meisel explains how Poland is a dynamic TV market

24. The drama of German TV drama makes pundits cry.



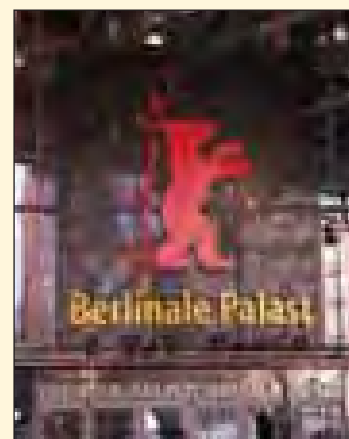
26. Technology: Getting high on hi-def.

28. Hollywood turns EST after profits went south with new media.

30. Every body part of an actor can be monetized.

32. NATPE review. Moving with the times: from show business to shoe business.

38. Berlin film market report. Call it Berlinale, but it could just as well have been AFMnale.



44. MIP-TV preview. Expect lots of action, business and some reaction to the latest events.

48. Trade advertising at TV markets such as MIP is 50 percent good. At least according to Bob Jenkins. Which 50 percent is as yet unknown.

54. Dermot Horan plays the "What if" scenario had WGA's strike continued into the spring or summer. Plus, what's left of TV pilots.

60. Hollywood rewritten. The calm after the storm. Assessing post-strike damages.

62. News about fairs, conventions and conferences worldwide.

64. My 2¢. Why Canadians are funny and others are not.

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wife goes on.

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Petry Chairs ATAS Foundation

Jerry Petry, executive vice president, Administration, NBC Universal Television, West Coast, has been voted chairman of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Foundation. Petry was elected to the volunteer position by the Foundation's Board of Directors at a December 3 meeting. He

will serve until the end of 2008.

"The Television Academy Foundation is one of the most important historical and educational entities in the business today," said Petry in a statement. "And with the rapid changes in technology and new media occurring in the television business, it is critical that we keep ahead of the curve and, at the same time, educate and guide the next generation of leaders in our field."



Jerry Petry, chairman of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Foundation

The non-profit Academy Foundation sponsors educational and archival

programs, and focuses on using the history and artistry of television to preserve the past and guide those who are the future of the telecommunications industry.

Petry is a media veteran with more than 30 years of experience. He's served as evp, Administration, NBC Universal TV, West Coast, since April 2006.

Toshiba Quits HD-DVD Battle

Japan's Toshiba Corp has officially withdrawn from the high-definition DVD biz, conceding defeat in a vicious format war with Sony. In February, the electronics giant announced that it would no longer develop, produce or sell HD DVD disc players. In doing so, it paved the way for Sony's Blu-ray format to become the standard for high-def DVDs.

During a heated two-year battle, Sony and Toshiba each tried to persuade Hollywood studios to release movies in their respective formats, and to convince game console makers to use their respective disc drives. The conflict was reminiscent of the battle fought between Matsushita's VHS format and Sony's Betamax for VCR control during the 1980s.

The death knell tolled for HD DVD when Warner Bros. and U.S. retail giant Wal-Mart both recently opted to back Blu-ray.

Toshiba halted all production of HD DVD players at the end of March, but will continue to offer customer support to the approximately 1 million buyers of the device for years to come.

While no official figures have been released, some analysts have said that Toshiba stands to lose hundreds of millions of dollars by dropping HD DVD. That would be a huge blow for many companies, but Toshiba should recover quickly. The firm had \$60.3 billion in sales last year.

WB Sidesteps TV Networks

Warner Bros. TV president Bruce Rosenblum recently told a group of California's Stanford Law School students that studios like his will soon bypass broadcast TV networks using broadband and cellular, and go directly to consumers with content.

A first glimpse of this new world he hinted at can be viewed in Warner's growing online effort, he said, noting that distribution deals with Fox and

(Continued on Page 6)



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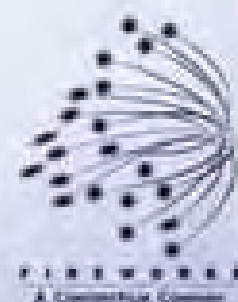
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(Continued from Page 4)

NBC Universal's Hulu.com (an online VoD service) are imminent.

Warner Bros. is also in the process of creating its own ad-supported channels. An animation channel (working name T-Works) will go live this month under an unspecified brand. Studio 2.0, which will create short videos for broadband and mobile, is working on more than 20 projects, at a total cost of less than what it takes to make an hour-long broadcast network drama.

Rosenblum went on to say that by cutting out the networks, studios will make more money than they have in the past. However, he cautioned, Warner Bros. will have to spend a lot to make itself the brand that viewers connect with a show.

Book Exposes Spielberg's Affair

Valerie Bertinelli's new book, "Losing It: And Gaining My Life Back One Pound at a Time" (Free Press) chronicles much more than just the actress's battle to lose weight. In her new autobiography, the onetime *One Day at a Time* star gives

candid accounts of her shaky marriage with rocker Eddie Van Halen and a long-ago romance with director extraordinaire Steven Spielberg.

In the book, Bertinelli, who has a son, Wolfgang, 17, with ex-husband Van Halen, revealed that she met Spielberg when she read for a part in his *Raiders of the Lost Ark* more than two decades ago. She didn't get the part, but she did get the man. The next day, Spielberg sent flowers and a short-lived romance blossomed. She met Van Halen shortly thereafter and married him in 1981. The couple divorced in 2007.

Another tidbit exposed in "Losing It" is the fact that she and Van Halen cheated on each other during their marriage. Bertinelli's been quoted as saying that their son, Wolfgang, won't be reading the book anytime soon.

Murdoch Dishes Out DirecTV

In February, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved an \$11 billion deal between Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and DirecTV Group Inc. The deal will allow Murdoch to exchange his 41 percent interest in El Segundo, California-based DirecTV for a larger stake in his own media company. Former cable executive John Malone and his holding company, Liberty Media, will receive Murdoch's shares, as well as three of Fox's regional cable/satellite channels and \$625 million in cash. In return, Malone will hand over his 16.3 percent equity stake in News Corp. DirecTV has 17 million subscribers in the U.S. and five million in Latin America.

Originating in 2004, the agreement has been delayed by much red tape, as both parties are hoping for a tax-free swap. This type of exchange requires approval by both the FCC and the U.S. Justice Department. Murdoch's aim, in buying back more of his company, is to consolidate his hold on News Corp. and streamline his assets. Some FCC officials who are against the consolidation of giant media conglomerates were reluctant to endorse the deal, and warned that both parties better abide by arbitration provisions imposed on them in 2003. At press time, Justice Department approval was still pending.

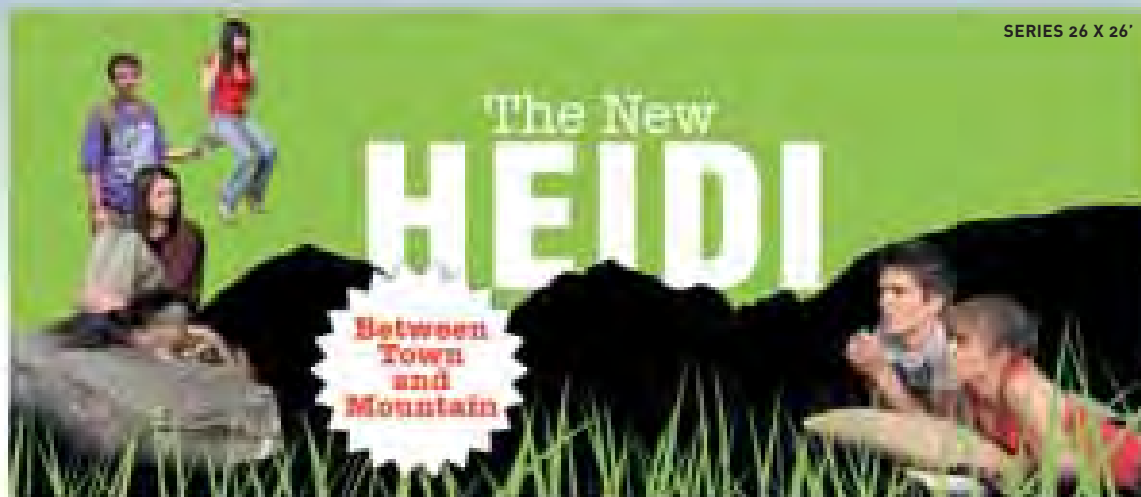
Martha Stewart Buys Emeril

Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia Inc. "kicked it up a notch" in late February when it bought the Emeril Lagasse franchise. The acquisition, which cost the home-making maven's company \$45 million in cash and \$5 million in stock, included the rights to Emeril-brand cookbooks, television shows and kitchen products. Not included in the deal were Lagasse's 11 restaurants and corporate office.

Lagasse's cooking show, *The Essence of Emeril*, was launched in 1993 on the Food Network. Since its debut, he has hosted over 1,600 shows and currently reaches more than 85 million homes daily. The franchise, which brought in \$14 million in revenue in 2007, is expected to add an additional \$8 million per year to Martha Stewart Living's earnings. The deal will be closed in the second quarter of 2008.

(Continued on Page 8)

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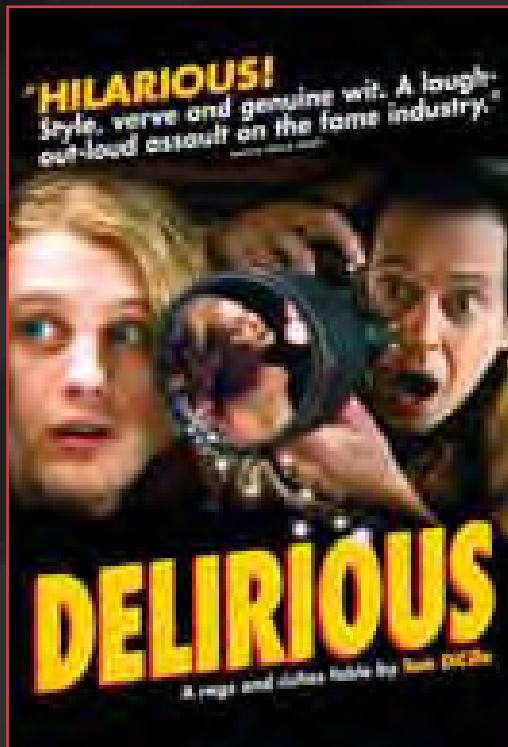
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(Continued from Page 6)

Sony, Sharp Meet To Build LCDs

Sony Corp. has announced that it will take a one-third stake in Sharp Corp's new LCD panel factory in Tokyo. The plant, which will cost \$3.5 billion to construct, will be completed by March 2010.

The partnership is a response to the

growing popularity of flat-screen televisions, which has prompted competition between Japanese manufacturers. It is projected that worldwide LCD TV sales will double to 155 million units sold per year by 2012. To keep up with increased demand, Sony has lately had to look for alternate suppliers of LCD panels for its TV sets. In teaming up with Sharp, Sony has secured its supply of screens, while Sharp has been guaranteed a reliable buyer.

After South Korea's Samsung Electronics, Sony and Sharp are, respectively, the second and third largest manufacturers of flat screen TVs. In addition to investing in Sharp, Sony will continue to partner with Samsung for LCD screens as a way to keep its panel suppliers diverse.

Apollo TV Project Out of Orbit

Arbitron and TV ratings giant Nielsen Co. have put a stop to Apollo, one of the most expensive and buzz-worthy market research programs in history. The program's sole purpose had been to examine how exposure to different media and marketing approaches affects purchases by tracking consumers' media and buying habits in a single database.

Arbitron used its Portable People Meters to track consumers' media exposure both in and out of the home among members of Nielsen's household panel, who had to scan each and every purchase they made. But while the service attracted seven major backers

(including Procter & Gamble Co.), Apollo just couldn't seem to win enough client commitments to be able to foot the bill for a massive U.S. rollout.

Arbitron and Nielsen reportedly put more than \$45 million combined into the program. Procter & Gamble is said to have paid another \$20 million.

Ben Ammar Goes to Italy

France-based Quinta Communications CEO Tarak Ben Ammar has acquired control of Eagle Pictures, a leading Italian film distributor, in a deal that is part of his strategy to establish a pan-European network supported by Goldman Sachs. This U.S. investment bank already holds significant stakes in Aurum in Spain and in Momentum Pictures in the U.K. and was instrumental to CanWest Global Communications' \$2.3-billion takeover of Alliance Atlantis.

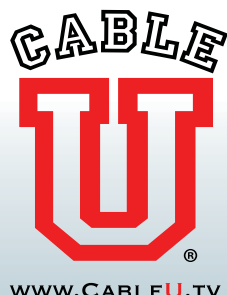
The Franco-Tunisian financier, Ben Ammar, is interested in creating a "one-stop shopping distribution network" for independent producers in Europe and is widely considered one of the brightest entrepreneurs in the entertainment arena. He is currently in advanced negotiations to acquire Nordic distribution company, Scanbox Entertainment, and is looking for new targets in Europe. Very few players can compete against the Ben Ammar-Goldman Sachs franchise, but one could be Russia's Gazprom Media, which owns interests in TV stations, radios and newspapers. This latest holding claims as the main objective of its activities the accumulation and development of media assets, and has access to significant liquidity for new acquisitions. Another obstacle could be presented by several Jordan and Qatari entrepreneurs, who, in the new geofinancial situation, could become main players in the entertainment industry.

In the market there are signs that motion pictures are regaining their importance as an asset class to corporate finance as hedge funds and private equity houses invested heavily in this industry in 2007. For example, Dark Castle Productions, a production company headed by producer Joel Silver, was able to raise \$240 million in a deal underwritten by CIT Group, a provider of commercial and consumer finance solutions with global headquarters in New York City.

In recent years the listing on the stock exchange has been an important growth strategy followed by several media companies. ContentFilm plc, a British company that holds an important library of film and television assets,

(Continued on Page 10)

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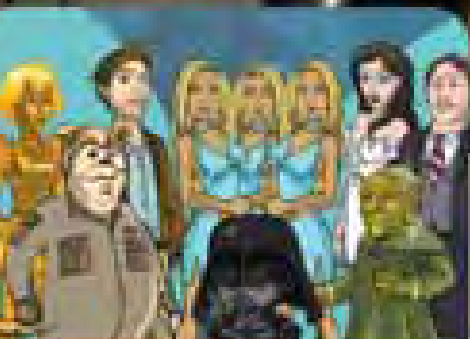
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(Continued from Page 8)

including over 2,000 hours of television and 100 feature films, should be a Harvard business case study. The company was able to grow significantly through the acquisition of certain assets of UAV Corporation and Allumination FilmWorks, and has become a leading player in Europe.

By Alessandro Valentini, CEO of Dioscuri Film Group and advisor of major private equity firms in their international operations. valentini@dioscurifilm.com

Bohm Now SVP At NBC Universal

Pauline Bohm has been promoted to senior vice president, Marketing, for NBC Universal International Television Distribution. Bohm, who is based in Los Angeles, reports to Belinda Menendez, president, NBC Universal International Television Distribution.

In other NBC news, Rachel Mansson has been promoted to vice president, Marketing, for NBC Universal International Television Distribution's international new media unit. In her new position, she will develop and implement all marketing efforts for the unit, spanning Electronic-Sell-Through, VoD and SVoD, available

through traditional and new platforms, including cable, satellite, digital terrestrial television, Internet and mobile.

In her new role, Bohm will continue to develop and implement marketing strategies for NBC Universal International Television Distribution and its television and feature film portfolio, working closely with an international client base in more than 250 territories. In addition, she is responsible for the division's international brand strategy and presence at all international sales markets and events, and is charged with identifying new and innovative marketing practices. Bohm manages teams based in Los Angeles and London and has worked on international marketing campaigns for

titles including *Heroes*, *House*, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Monk*.

"Pauline has done an outstanding job in taking our marketing efforts well beyond expectations and plays an instrumental role in our overall business," said Menendez. "She has impeccable taste and is a master at staying ahead of the trend, providing our clients with a world-class level of support."



NBC Universal International TV's Pauline Bohm

Poetry in Motion At Abu Dhabi TV

In the 1980s, France's Antenne 2 (now France 2) found a surprise domestic and international hit in *Apostrophes*, a little show about books and writers. Now, thanks to a hit show about poetry on Abu Dhabi TV, writers are back!

Loosely based on the format of *American Idol*, *Million's Poet* is the Arab world's attempt to show the rest of the globe that it has something to offer other than oil. Now in its second season, the series has already spawned copycats, websites and tons of blog postings.

In each episode, players recite a tribal form of poetry known as Nabati, which can sound incomprehensible even to Arab speakers. But within hours of the show's debut, its website had received 11 million hits. A season's worth of episodes (15) reportedly costs U.S.\$12 million to produce, but it's made back quickly with commercials and sponsorships. After realizing that they had a hit on their hands, the station commissioned a second poetry series, *The Prince of Poets*, which showcases classical Arab poetry.

Famous Quotes

"My son is now an 'entrepreneur.' That's what you are called when you don't have a job."

Ted Turner

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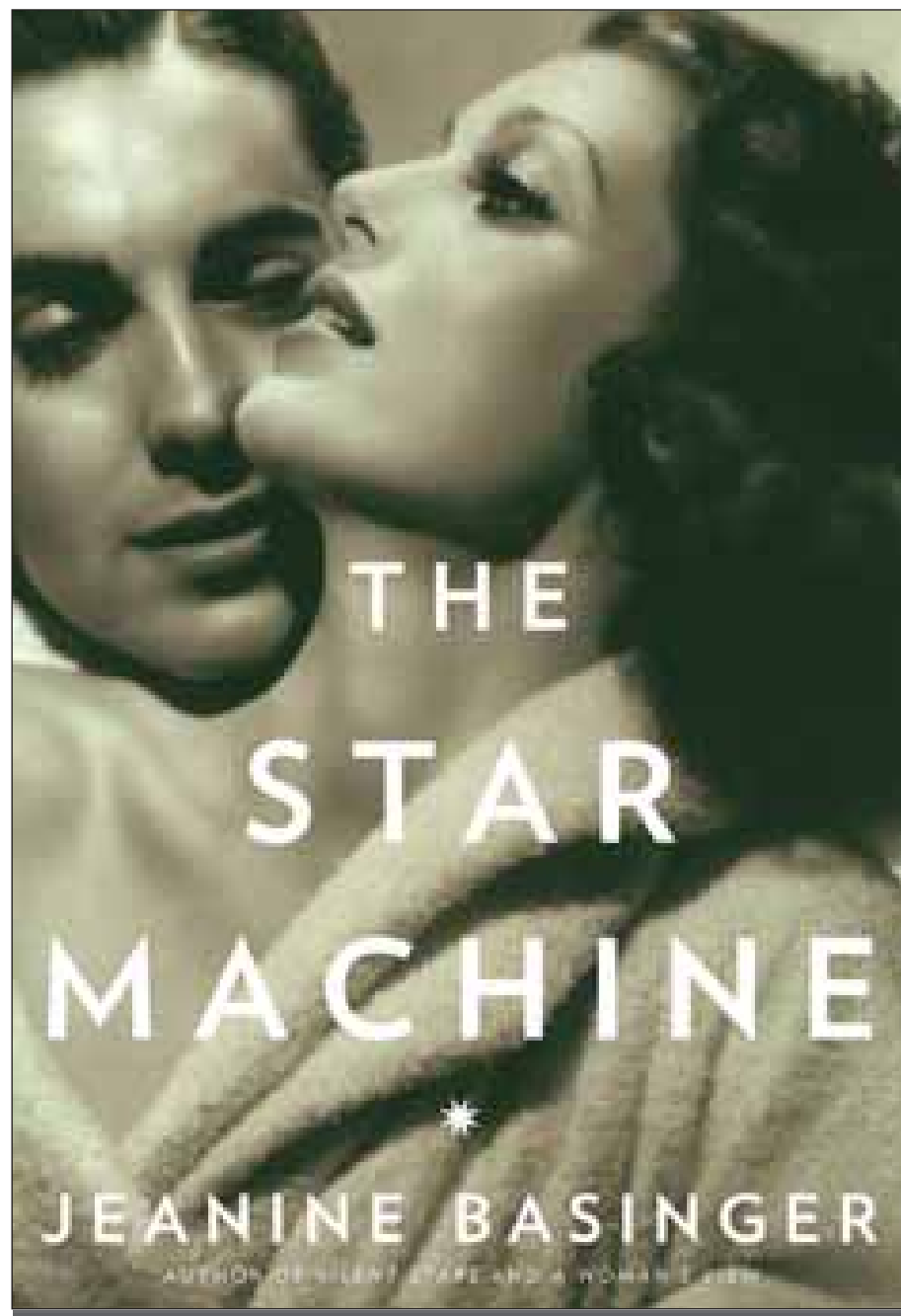
Star Power In Hollywood's Golden Age

The concept of celebrity has greatly evolved since the golden age of the Hollywood studio system. The days of high glamour, when actors were elevated to demi-god status, have long since ceased to exist. Today, thanks to the ubiquity of the paparazzi, the shamelessness of gossip blogs and a culture that gorges on scandal, the mystique of Hollywood stars has practically been eliminated.

In *The Star Machine* (2007, Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, 586 pages, U.S., \$35), author Jeanine Basinger (no relation to actress Kim) provides an in-depth look at fame before the Internet put the minutiae of movie stars' everyday lives on display. The book highlights the differences between the way stars are portrayed in the media today — more or less how they really are — and how they were presented by the studios in the 1930s and '40s — polished products for public consumption. But although photographs and films depict Hollywood's golden age as a much classier era, before the advent of bloodthirsty tabloids, *The Star Machine* suggests that things have never been easy for those in the spotlight.

Basinger is the author of several other books on the early days of Hollywood such as *Silent Stars* and *American Cinema: One Hundred Years of Filmmaking*, and her knowledge of industry miscellany is staggering. The book is brimming over with case studies about stars, thoughtful analyses of films and detailed explanations of the business side of the movie world. It begins by introducing the studio system. By the mid-1930s, the major studios (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Brothers, Twentieth Century Fox, etc.) had movie-making down to a science. A movie studio in the golden era was, according to Basinger, "a well-oiled machine with everything needed to make movies right on the lot." They churned out dozens of films a year, with an efficiency that is unheard of today.

The movie star was vital to this system. Though stars were treated simply as well-paid employees, they were the key to marketing films and selling movie tickets. And because the studios were making such a profusion of films (678 titles were released in 1934 and 477 in 1946), they needed a lot of



stars. Hence, the inexact process of the "star machine" was adopted.

In the beginning of the book, Basinger attempts to pinpoint what exactly defines a star. "A star has exceptional looks. Outstanding talent. A distinctive voice that can be easily recognized and imitated. A set of mannerisms. Palpable sexual appeal. Energy that comes off the screen. Glamour. Androgyny. Glowing health and radiance. Panache...And of course she has that something." With such a formula in mind, the studios set out to transform ordinary people into box office legends.

The first step was to find able-bodied, enthusiastic youngsters eager to hit it big. From Broadway to small-town beauty pageants, scouts left no stone unturned in their quest for "raw material." Because studios were confident that acting could be taught and singing could be dubbed, talent was secondary to looks. Once studios heads assessed the potential of each new "property," the would-be stars were given makeovers. Beauty experts capped crooked teeth, adjusted hairlines and implemented strict diets.

Makeovers were just one of the many ways studios stripped individuals of their

identities. Name changes were also an important part of the star machine assembly line. Up-and-coming stars had to have names that sounded glamorous but were generically American enough to go over well with the public. Basinger catalogues the most amusing examples of such changes: "The tall and exotic beauty Cyd Charisse had the comedy handle of Tula Finklea. Cary Grant was Archibald Leach — no elegant man of your dreams there — and Robert Taylor, a pretty man always striving to seem more masculine, carried the original name of Spangler Arlington Brugh." Stars were allowed no say in their new names, and in fact, a contest-winning fan chose the moniker Joan Crawford for celebrity-hopeful Lucille La Sueur.

Once stars were coiffed and named to satisfaction, the studio began to try them out in bit roles. If they did well, they were promoted to larger roles, and so on. On the way up the fame ladder, the studios exercised further control by creating new personal back-stories for them and having them printed in fan magazines. Such stories often had no relation to reality. MGM, for instance, made Clark Gable an avid sportsman and hunter, though he had never ridden a horse, and claimed to have discovered Lana Turner sitting on a drug store stool, though she later confessed that she could not recall the meeting.

Insider anecdotes like these make up the best portions of the book. However, readers who are not classic movie aficionados may find themselves lost amongst the elaborate discussions of films and stars that have faded into obscurity.

Along with the gossipy asides, the parallels Basinger draws to the stars of today are of greatest interest. Despite the hefty paychecks, constant work and having their public images micro-managed by the studios, stars still got into trouble. Lana Turner went through a slew of husbands and was eventually pigeonholed into "harlot" roles. Tyrone Power had a similarly turbulent personal life and died young, and Gail Russell became a notorious alcoholic. Basinger stresses that the studio responses to these star machine "malfunctions" were crass. Studio executives "concentrated only on success and didn't waste much time trying to explain or analyze failure."

Even in the so-called golden age of Hollywood, stars that seemed to have it all cracked under the pressure of fame. However, unlike today, their dirty laundry could not be displayed on TV and the Internet with moment-to-moment updates for all the world to see. In fact, studios controlled much of the pop-media. What went into the fan magazines was subject to their approval. The book suggests that although the studios were demanding of stars, and often treated them like "properties" rather than people, they also did much to protect them from the public. But as history tells us, the studio system couldn't last and, neither could the public's idealized perception of Hollywood glamour. **ES** ●



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The Pamela Anderson Show



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CinemaVault: A Small Company That's Big in Film, TV Sales

BY LUCY COHEN BLATTER

With over 300 film titles and 800 buyers internationally, CinemaVault Releasing is a fixture on the TV and film market scene, in addition to both the big and small screens worldwide. In 2008 alone, the company will attend 17 markets and festivals around the globe, one of which will be this month's MIP-TV.

"We go to MIP-TV to meet with the tremendous range of buyers that are present," said Caroline Stern, a senior Sales executive at CinemaVault, pointing specifically to a "sizable number of video buyers" with whom she plans to meet.

But, according to Stern, a worldwide collapse of the video market, in which "the volume of acquisitions in territories around the world is down," has made TV sales increasingly important to the company.

Ruby Rondina, Festivals and Publicity manager at CinemaVault, said she chooses to "attend the biggest and most important festivals — Cannes, Toronto, Berlin, Sundance — in order to acquire films." But, she added, "we also attend festivals where our films are screening in order to push the films to buyers."

Luckily, the company has plenty of arthouse and commercial films with which to lure buyers. One of the newest theatrical features in the CinemaVault catalogue, entitled *Blind Date*, premiered earlier this year at the Sundance Film Festival, and will be available at MIP-TV. The film, directed by Stanley Tucci, is the



Caroline Stern, senior Sales executive at CinemaVault



Interview was sold to Sony Pictures Classics

second part in a three-part series based on the films of controversial Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, and has been co-financed by CinemaVault.

The first film in the series, *Interview*, starring Sienna Miller and Steve Buscemi, has already been sold to Sony Pictures Classics, which released the film theatrically and on DVD in the U.S., and to various other buyers around the world, including Kinowelt in Germany and Diaphana in France.

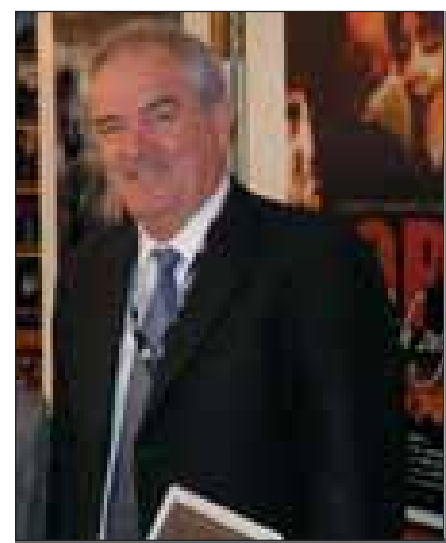
The third and final film in the series, *I-900*, will be directed by John Turturro, and will begin production this spring.

The company also owns rights to the original van Gogh films from which the

new titles are adapted.

Another new feature is Morgan Spurlock's *Confessions of a Superhero*, a documentary by the director of *Supersize Me*, which chronicles the lives of three men and one woman making their livings as superheros on the sidewalks of Hollywood Boulevard.

Arthouse films are strongly represented in CinemaVault's catalogue, but titles range from commercial features to documentaries to family entertainment. When asked what he looks for in a film, the company's CEO and founder, Nick Stiliadis, said simply, "quality. At the end of the day, it's quality that will give our films longevity."



Nick Stiliadis, CEO and founder of CinemaVault

A 30-year veteran of the film business who has produced or executive produced over 30 feature films, Stiliadis previously ran a production company called S Entertainment. In 2000, he decided to concentrate on distribution, merging his production expertise with knowledge of sales to form CinemaVault Releasing. "One thing that makes us unique," he said, "is our ability to deal with issues related to the entire process of making and marketing a film — from pre-production to distribution."

The company, which has 18 full-time employees, launched with a five-year business plan. Having exceeded expectations, the plan was revised for another five years in 2005. The company is a member of the Independent Film & Television Alliance (the organizers of AFM), the Canadian Film and Television Production Association and the Video Software Dealers Association.

Though Stiliadis chose to keep the company's base in Toronto, Canada, where he lives, aside from location, he says there's nothing noticeably Canadian about the company. While CinemaVault does represent some Canadian titles, they're not the company's focus. Thanks to today's technology, Stiliadis said, one can be a strong force in the entertainment business without being based in Los Angeles.

And contrary to some reports, a company can also be a strong force without being a studio or a mini-major. "With a smaller company, you also have lower overhead, and get to try new things you wouldn't be able to do as a larger company," Stern said. "Plus, we have the opportunity to work with the studios," she said, pointing specifically to a new comedy entitled *Outsourced*, which is described as a "comedy of cross-cultural differences with a touch of romance" and will be released by Twentieth Century Fox in Germany.

"While it's impossible to compete with the studios," Stiliadis said, "we can augment what they're bringing out there. For that reason, we're always looking for real diamonds in the rough and for producers with unique visions."

"Once we find them," he said, "we work closely with them to make sure they get the maximum exposure." ●



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Comedy Tracks Link Toronto To Hollywood

BY DIANE L.W. BARNES

A funny thing happened on the way to the United States. David Steinberg left Winnipeg, Canada for theology school in Chicago and ended up at The Second City comedy troupe instead. Quite a leap. Or was it? Despite Canada's disproportionately small population compared to that south of the border, the American comedy industry is filled with big names from the north.

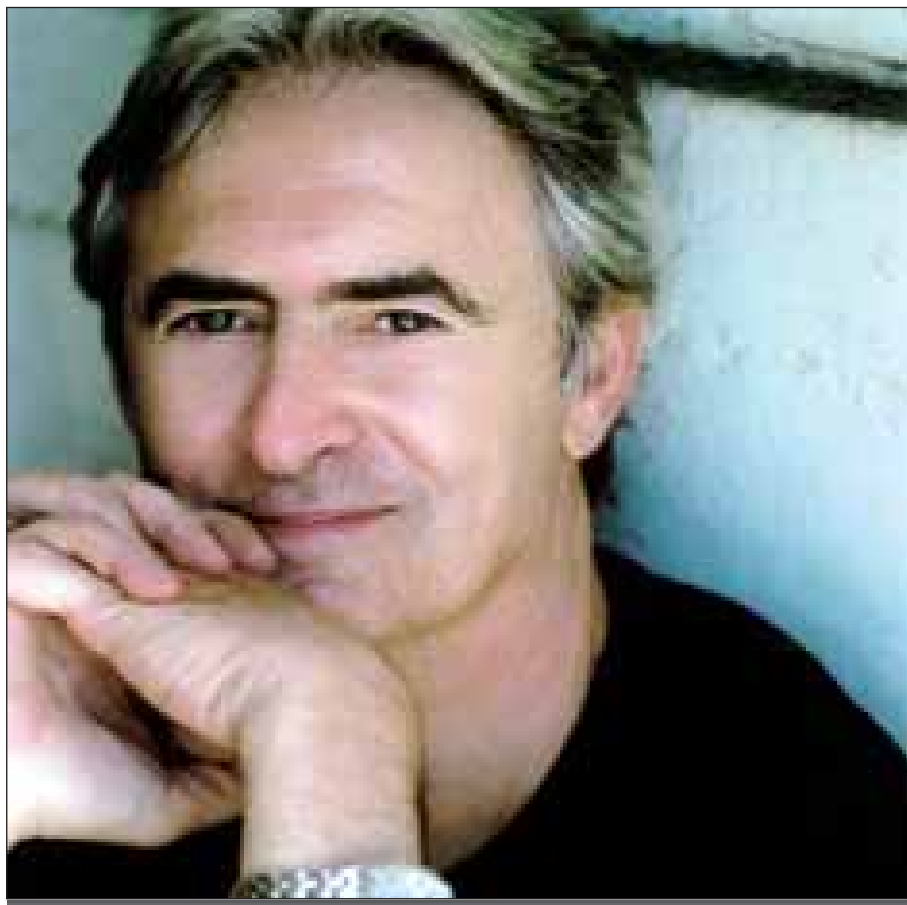
Since the mid-60s, there's been a steady stream of Canadian comics exported south — a fact that many Americans like to keep secret. In fact, some of the biggest comedy names in Hollywood have been Canadian: Dan Aykroyd, John Candy, Jim Carrey, Tommy Chong, Howie Mandel, Dave Foley, Michael J. Fox, Phil Hartman, Eugene Levy, Rich Little, Lorne Michaels, Rick Moranis, Mike Myers, Leslie Nielsen, Catherine O'Hara, Martin Short, comedy duo John Wayne and Frank Shuster, Dave Thomas, and of course, David Steinberg, head counselor of the all-Canadian Camp HaHa.

In the late 1950s, Steinberg was one of the earliest imports to the U.S. Where he went, many followed. Steinberg described the critical role that Chicago's Second City has played: "It was Second City that started *all* of it. Mike Myers started there and almost everyone from *Second City TV* (SCTV) came from Second City. Dan Aykroyd had huge involvement with Second City. He was a big star in Toronto for a long time and then in Chicago. Basically when I was putting together *The David Steinberg Show* in the 70s, I gathered everyone I knew from Second City. John Candy was the first big hit and when he came to the States, he lived in my guesthouse for a year and a half. John was such an adorable person and funny all day long... just the way he was, warm and wonderful."

It was on Steinberg's show where many Canadian comedians honed their unique impersonation style, a style that remains prevalent in today's hit shows such as *Saturday Night Live*. As Steinberg related, "We didn't start using makeup or prosthetics to identify ourselves as others but one day I remember coming to work and everyone was laughing hysterically. It was Marty Short with this big hair and

white teeth just being a really bizarre character and I didn't know who he was playing. He was doing an impression of me! He got me down so great. He used to impersonate me endlessly — they all did — but that was the first time I saw the value of something like that. They had caught the essence — it was satirically and comedically right. It was remarkable. You just got the feeling of the person and it sort of changed the way that impressionists worked after that. They were just comedians. They weren't trying to do great impressions. They were just

Two of the six comedians interviewed in the first year were fellow Canadians Mike Myers and Martin Short. While Short was brilliant, he also shared a heartfelt story of how instrumental Steinberg had been in helping to launch his career. Myers, on the other hand, saw no need for any reverence to be bestowed upon his fellow countryman. The interview had just begun when Myers asked Steinberg, "Was that your idea of a question, dickhead?" The audience roared. It was at that moment when Steinberg reflected, "This is exactly the



Canadian comedian David Steinberg

trying to satirize the culture."

Today, Steinberg is producing and hosting his third season of *Sit-Down Comedy with David Steinberg*, a show that gets the laughs. "The guests are like musicians — their chops are in, they're ready to go, they're good. I just love that it's two comedians talking. There's a shorthand and the audience gets to listen in. And, because the audience is there, it's always funny. You get enough information and you get the sense of the comedy craft in action. It's totally spontaneous."

show I want!"

Despite the fact that Canadians help other Canadians get established in the U.S., a puzzling question remains: why are there so many remarkably funny people in Canada? Is it something in the snow? Has it got something to do with the canoes they paddle to work? Maybe it's related to all that skiing they do 12 months of the year. Or in which province they were born. Curious.

Another factor may have something to do with an irreverent style, an

*If you're Canadian,
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approach for which Steinberg has been well known, particularly during his time with the *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* in the late 60s just prior to the cancellation of the show. Perhaps Canadian comedians feel that not being American gives them more latitude to be a little saucier. It's about having the vantage point of an outsider.

As Steinberg put it, "as Canadians we *get* the American culture, yet we're still Canadian. I always told everyone I was Canadian. In fact, when I was doing *The Tonight Show* during Watergate, I was sort of vehement and negative. Early on, as a comedian, I was against Nixon and the audience would always be polarized. Carson would tease me at the commercial saying, 'You know, you're a Canuck, you don't even vote in this country and you're putting down Nixon!' And it was always his little arrow he was going to stab me with."

Then there's the notion that Canadians are naturally comical. Steinberg described his hometown friends in Winnipeg as having always been very funny. Or perhaps it has to do with their need for self-definition. "In the 50s, I always thought that Canada somehow got the worst of Britain and the worst of the States and at some point, in terms of the culture, they essentially had to create their own, and this started to come from these comedians and actors who came from Canada."

All of this, however, would be for nothing if the American industry and audiences did not welcome Canadian talent. "The States is *very* aware of Canadian comedians and their influence on the culture here," said Steinberg. "If you're Canadian, all you have to do is be good and you're accepted. Most of these people, especially the *SCTV* group who really established the Canadian comedy culture in the States, are as good as it gets." ●



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Do 47 Million Viewers Make An Audience For Ad Men?

A new audience measurement system in the U.S. could change the way foreign-language TV stations are perceived by the advertising community. Global Advertising Strategies, a New York-based consulting firm that acts as a liaison between advertisers and some ethnic television stations, is developing a way to bring the Nielsen Television Ratings system to the ethnics' unrated programs. The firm hopes that the new system, which will tally the number of viewers of certain programs, will encourage advertisers to insert ads into programs on ethnic channels, the majority of which are currently funded by cable or satellite subscription or public sponsorship.

According to a study conducted in May 2007 by Global Advertising, about 200 foreign language channels operate in the U.S. — channels like India's TV Asia, Channel 1 Russia, Germany's DW, Spain's TVE, France 5, Italy's RAI Italia and Korea's MK TV — representing virtually every ethnic group found in America. Indian, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish-language shows lead the pack in the amount of programming available. However, though niche programming has experienced a boom in the past few years, many U.S. advertisers are still reluctant to jump on the foreign-language bandwagon. "Advertisers don't consider some ethnic channels because their audiences are not monitored," explained Max Smetannikov, vice president, Corporate Development, Global Advertising Strategies. The problem is that "ethnic channels, taken individually, do not pull in enough viewers to even be rated."

Smetannikov attributes the recent increase of ethnic channels to globalization and improvements in technology. As satellite and fiber optic cabling technology have become more affordable, more foreign programming has hit the airwaves. However, he cites changing views of immigrants in the U.S. as the biggest factor in the rise of ethnic programming. "Cultural perception has changed dramatically in the U.S.," said Smetannikov, "and immigrants are no longer expected to

assimilate. They are more inclined to cling to their homelands."

In addition to cable and satellite platforms, ethnic programming is popping up on terrestrial TV. Stations like Washington D.C.-based MHz cater to the international crowd with content from all over the globe. MHz's main channel, for example, sells airtime to foreign TV organizations such as France 24, Nigerian Television, and Russia Today. With nine affiliates in both urban and rural areas, MHz reaches about 14 percent of the U.S. population.

In recent years, the growth of foreign-language TV in the U.S. has also been encouraged by an organization called the Ethnic Broadcasters of America (EBA). The non-profit organization was founded in 2003 by Elie Kawkabani, president of Los Angeles-based Reach Media, which offers Arabic programming packages by subscription, in addition to Italian channels. The EBA is dedicated to advancing foreign-language channels and programmers broadcasting via satellite and cable. Kawkabani has said his goal was to "create a forum by which [foreign-language channels] can pool their resources," in order to attract mainstream corporate advertisers.

Yet despite growth in the ethnic TV market, and a wealth of statistics touting the buying power of immigrants, advertisers remain standoffish. In 2000, the U.S. Census Board reported that 47 million people in the U.S. speak a language other than English at home, and that the purchasing power of these individuals will only increase. They predict that Hispanic buying power will reach \$1 trillion a year by 2011, and Asian-American wealth will increase 434 percent.

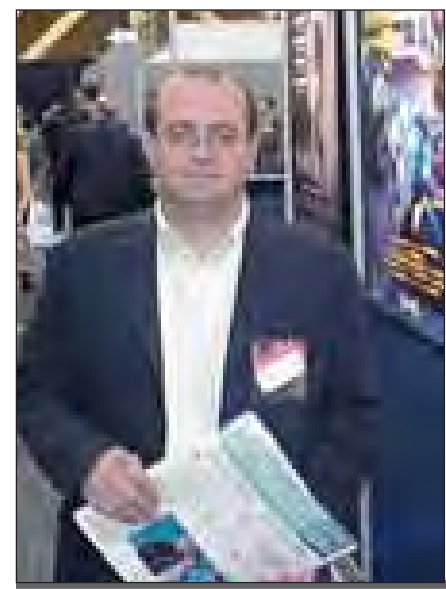
However, the absence of a ratings system remains a deterrent for advertisers. While rated programs guarantee that the advertisers get as many viewers as they pay for, programs that are not measured under the Nielsen system pose a risk. At the moment, Global Advertising estimates that around 95 percent of ethnic channels

are financed by subscription. Depending on the channel and cable provider, such services cost the viewer between \$5 and \$30 a month. Global Advertising expects to change this trend with its ratings method, which would adapt the Nielsen Ratings System to ethnic programming.

Among its many flaws, Nielsen fails to take into account what millions of non-English speakers are watching. Global Advertising plans to rectify the problem with what it calls the Multi-Cultural Multi-Platform Programmer Platform (MMPP). The system would not gather ratings from individual stations, as in the Nielsen system, but rather aggregate channels together by ethnicity and count them as one entity. This way, advertisers could find out which time slots and programs are most popular among Spanish speakers, for example, and insert Spanish-language ads accordingly. The plan would bring advertising to foreign-language TV, which could prove to be a multi-million dollar industry.

In fact, Global Advertising's Smetannikov projects that the value of spots on ethnic channels would quickly become comparable to those on major stations. The value of TV advertising operates on the basis of tiers. Commercials on broadcast channels are generally the most expensive, followed by major national cable carriers, smaller cable channels, and satellite at the cheaper end. "Hispanic channels, many of them broadcast and major cable, are on par with what NBC and others charge," said Smetannikov, "meaning it's not uncommon to see \$2,500 per 30-second spot on a hit show." For the most part, however, Smetannikov compares 30-second ads on ethnic channels to what they would cost on other specialty channels like men's channel Spike TV. Ads on typical premium foreign language channels like Channel One Russia Worldwide would go for about \$300.

MHz's general manager Frederick Thomas echoed Smetannikov's predictions. "The specificity of the audience could really allow advertisers to target and pinpoint who they want to



Elie Kawkabani

reach," he said. On the other hand, networks like MHz have audiences ranging from ages 18 to 80. Thomas called this kind of audience a "thematic demographic," because it is connected more by its global outlook and interest in other cultures than by its age or gender. "Thematic demographics definitely have a commercial value," said Thomas. "We just haven't found it yet."

Despite the confidence presented by ethnic stations, Smetannikov reported that the realization of the MMPP is still a ways away. Between familiarizing Nielsen Media Research and the networks with the plan and fine-tuning the system, Smetannikov and his team have their work cut out for them. "In order to get it right from an economic standpoint," said Smetannikov, "We need support across the board from networks, advertisers and viewers."

On a larger scale, the MMPP could change the way all niche programming operates. A variety of other specialized channels could soon make the switch from subscription to advertising. Channels like The Jewish Channel, Christian station Smile of a Child TV, and LOGO, which caters to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender viewers, are all currently available for \$5 to \$10 a month. Ad insertion on such stations, and on publicly sponsored channels, which are typically very poor, could prove mutually beneficial to advertisers, channels and viewers alike.

As for the foreseeable future of advertising on niche channels, Max Smetannikov said that, "it just doesn't make sense not to do it." And though it may take a while, Smetannikov is confident that his company can facilitate the transition. **ES** ●
(An abridged version of this feature story originally appeared in one of VideoAge's NATPE Dailies).



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Cheap U.S. Dollar A Bonanza For Hollywood

BY STEVEN M. SCHIFFMAN, ESQ.

Since last year the euro has consistently gained against the U.S. dollar. The value of the U.S. dollar is a global bonanza for both Europe and Hollywood. The situation is a no-brainer, noted international European economist, Andrey Moissejev. "With a cheaper dollar there exists an increased appetite for more co-ventures, as well as licensing deals and cheaper co-productions." In other words, said Moissejev, American product can be obtained at a lesser cost to non-American partners. Consequently, said Moissejev, in terms of the weak dollar, American media companies have benefited twice: more sales and, for those who have foreign activities, more revenue on the books (when converting to U.S. dollars).

A look at Hollywood's foreign box office numbers clearly reflects the accuracy of Moissejev's statements. Some of the summer's most staggering business took place overseas, with box office in international territories up 20 percent from last year, 30 percent ahead of 2005. And as much as moviegoers seemed to crave Hollywood product, studios benefited because of the weak dollar. The euro's value against the dollar grew by seven percent over the past 12 months. That meant more money for studios when dollars were translated from local currencies.

The cheaper dollar offers a lift to American exporters by making their products more competitive in many parts of the world. And while a weak dollar usually makes imports more expensive, import prices have climbed far less than other currencies so far because foreign producers have kept prices low in order to preserve market share in the United States.

Another result of the weak dollar has been an increase in the number of foreign commercial producers coming to the U.S. to take advantage of the comparably low prices. Indeed Canada, a major film haven in recent years, has experienced its first drop in domestic production in more than a decade. The



German chancellor Angela Merkel

dollar depreciation has definitely helped to stem runaway production costs that had taken place recently. "The most dramatic development has been the change in the value of the [U.S.] dollar versus the Canadian dollar," said one observer, noting that he was not discounting the effect the dollar has had on Europe and other areas that are linked with the euro.

"I've been told that foreign commercial producers in Germany, Japan, and all across Europe have come here to shoot because of the weak dollar. Producers of all types are always looking to where it will be most cost-effective," said a former executive of the U.S. Association of Independent Commercial Producers, in a published interview.

For those in Europe who now appear to be "crying wolf," Numis Securities Limited analyst Lorna Tilbian has some calming words. For British and European companies with the right business model, exposure to the dollar isn't necessarily a bad thing, said Tilbian. She said that European media firms Pearson, Reed and Thomson were among the most resilient in their sector, despite doing most of their business in dollars.

Pearson, the education and publishing company, generates about two-thirds of its sales in America and, according to its last trading statement, each five-cent change in the average pound/dollar

exchange rate for the full year would have an impact of about one pence on adjusted earnings per share. "We can live with the dollar exposure. It's the lesser of all evils," she said.

Then, of course, there has been the benefit of a reduced trade imbalance. The U.S. trade gap shrank 0.6 percent to \$56.5 billion in November 2007. That's still a lot of money, but it's the smallest deficit since May 2005. The numbers may help explain why the Bush Administration doesn't seem too bent out of shape over the falling dollar, which has recently been hitting new lows on a nearly daily basis against the euro. In fact, analysts are predicting that the euro will head to \$1.70 in the coming months. In a recent television interview, German chancellor Angela Merkel said: "We are pleased that Europe has a strong currency, but this obviously also creates problems for exports."

"Implicitly, the Federal Reserve is happy with a gradual fall in the value of the dollar," said Nouriel Roubini, an economist at New York University and president of Roubini Global Economics, a consulting firm that also operates a popular economics Web site. "They'll never say they favor a weak dollar, but the benefits to the U.S. in terms of competitiveness are significant."

Some European officials, though, are worried that the soaring value of the euro will hurt European exports. In this respect the U.S. silence has been



Christine Lagarde, French Finance Minister

"With a cheaper dollar there exists an increased appetite for more co-ventures, as well as licensing deals and cheaper co-productions." In other words, said Moissejev, American product can be obtained at a lesser cost to non-American partners

thunderous. "I would like very much to hear U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson repeat loud and clear that a strong dollar is good for the American economy," said Christine Lagarde, the French Finance Minister, in a published interview appearing in the financial daily, *Les Echos*.

Rate cuts expected from the U.S. Federal Reserve, the Bank of England and the European Central Bank are likely to put further downward pressure on the dollar. "Predicting the bottom is very hard. I can't see an end to it. It doesn't look like there is anything holding it up," said James Hughes, an analyst at London-headquartered CMC Markets. "It's unbelievable," he said.

There are those who will say that the U.S. is purposely manipulating the dollar exchange rate for its own economic self-interest, and are therefore introducing protectionist measures. However, if Europe deals with the strong euro by imposing specially crafted protectionist measures, it will lead to acrimonious trade disputes. In the final analysis, with the dollar being the world's reserve currency, the U.S. seems well equipped to minimize the negative consequences of a sharp devaluation of its currency while taking immense advantage of the opportunities it creates. A big factor in this is the flexibility and adaptability of the U.S. economy, particularly of a private sector that is less fettered by regulations than its European counterpart. ●

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A Dynamic TV Market With Riches Reaching Maturity

BY FARRELL E. MEISEL

From a program distribution standpoint, Poland is one of the most lucrative territories in Europe. Stations pay record prices for studio output deals, mainly for movies. Every major international format has either been sold or is about to be licensed.

A new player on the Polish TV market is TV Puls, which was revived following a significant investment by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp last year. TV Puls was granted a general license by the government's media regulator, instead of a Catholic-only license (the old channel had been restricted to carrying only Catholic-oriented programs). TV Puls was awarded five significant terrestrial license frequencies in key cities, which will increase its coverage (both cable and satellite) to approximately 73 percent of the market come June 2008.

The channel was re-positioned in October 2007, targeting the 16-49 age group audience, and featuring original and licensed entertainment formats. It now features a growing and respected news division, producing over three-and-a-half-hours of news daily, with a political centrist point of view, with over 120 staffers in the news department. The channel's audience has grown by 63 percent and revenue has tripled since the launch.

Poland is the largest country (in terms of population) in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the fifth largest television market in Europe. With a population of nearly 39 million people, there are 13.86 million TV households. The Polish economy is the fastest growing in CEE, with strong growth expected through next year. Poland was one of the 10 countries to join the European Union in May 2004.

Poland is also a dynamic, competitive television market with a growing total advertising spend (approximately U.S.\$2 million per annum). Television secures a little more than half of advertising budgets. The advertising market is expected to continue its growth, between 10 to 12 percent,



Farrell Meisel

according to some estimates.

There are over 70 television stations in Poland, and four of them account for a significant piece of the audience share. However, cable and satellite are fast gaining audience and advertising shares.

TVP1 and TVP2 are state-controlled. They collectively enjoy a 45 percent share of the audience. TVP also has the advantage of receiving two revenue streams: a mandatory license fee and advertising. TVP1 produces the market-leading evening newscast at 7:30 p.m., which presents its newscast in a dull, no-nonsense style with vestiges of its Communist past. Its newscasts are perceived to take the government line. TVP1 targets an A4+ audience, but, like its sister channel, TVP2, which is more entertainment-based, it skews very old. Both channels program original soap operas, dramas, entertainment formats and political talk shows, a national mainstay. TVP has an output studio deal with NBC Universal. TVP recently converted TVP3, a network of regional stations into an ad-supported, all-news terrestrial channel, TVP Info, which is vying for market leadership in the heavily-competitive cable news race, against ITI Group's TVN24, only on cable and satellite.

Polsat, the market's first private commercial station, recently celebrated its 15th year (see *VideoAge*,

February/March 2000). Its programming, while having mass appeal, since it focuses on the all-important 16-49 target group, is perceived, based on market research, as down-market and rural in its orientation. Its programming consists of locally produced dramas, comedies, some formats, and a heavy roster of studio theatrical films, including output from 20th Century Fox and two of the *CSI* dramas. While it programs one main newscast in the early evening at 6:50 p.m., and a late-afternoon bulletin, news is not its strongest asset.

Polsat also owns the leading satellite platform, with its own content. The company reports two million subscribers and is owned by Zygmunt Soor-Zak.

TVN just celebrated 10 years in the business, and is the market's only private channel trading on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. Fifty-nine percent of TVN is owned by ITI Group, which also has a new DTH platform, 'n' or Neovision, with 13 digital thematic channels, and other programming. TVN focuses on the 16-49 demographic with the usual entertainment fare, heavy on formats, dramas, and movies from output agreements including Warner Bros. and Paramount/DreamWorks. The TV news division is considered the strongest in the market, aided by a growing and

respected 24-hour news channel, TVN24, seen on cable and satellite, and a new business channel, TVN CNBC Business. TVN produces only one newscast at 7 p.m. Its terrestrial coverage reaches 50 percent of the market, but is helped by cable and satellite delivery.

The main free-to-air channels average between a 15 and 25 percent audience share, which creates one of the most competitive environments for free-to-air (FTA) broadcasting in CEE. And, the free-to-air shares will continue to drop as multi-channels gain traction.

The first digital multiplex should be introduced as early as 2010, which would create a more level playing field for TV Puls and other broadcasters.

Poland's pay-TV market is among the most competitive in CEE. In addition to the aforementioned Polsat Satellite and 'n' (250,000 subscribers), Canal Plus is the second-largest satellite provider with a reported one million subscribers. There are over 600 cable systems, including UPC Polska, owned by Liberty Global, Vectra, Multimedia Polska and Aster City, bringing multi-channel viewing to more than 60 percent.

The pay-TV international programmers include Canal Plus (movies and sports), HBO, Cinemax, Discovery, FOX Life, Hallmark, AXN, National Geographic, MTV and Viva.

The challenges, as in most territories, include a sliding share for FTA players due to audience fragmentation and increased competition.

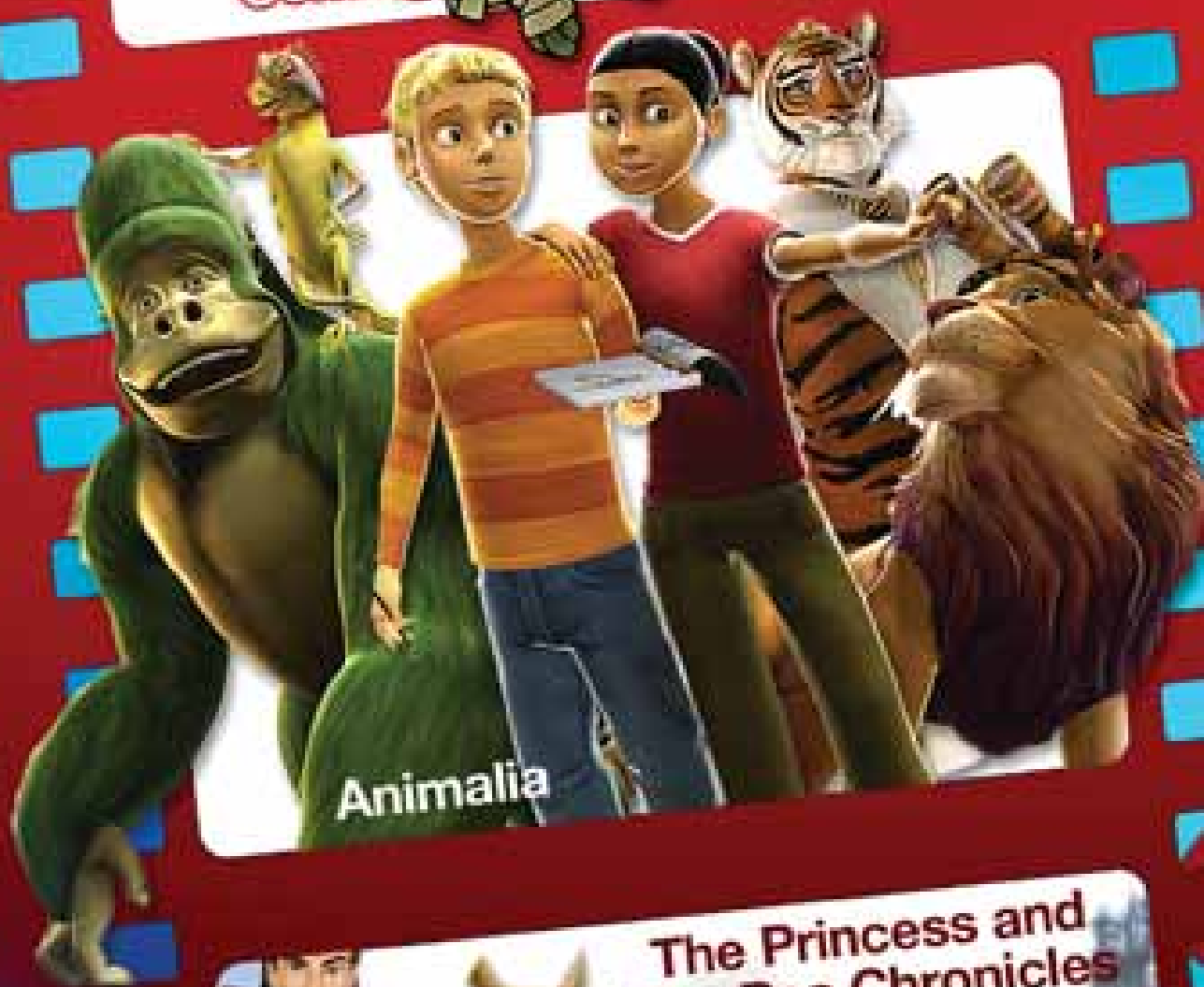
Newscasts in Poland tend to position themselves based on political preferences. TVP is more right-wing and government-focused, even though the national elections last November, saw a new Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, leader of the Civic Platform political party, take office, handily defeating Jaroslaw Kaczynski, leader of the right-wing and the often-maligned Law and Order party, and the twin brother of the country's president, Lech Kaczynski. Ironically, it is Tusk's party, which is more business-oriented, and Kaczynski's challenge for the country's media, which seems to favor one party or another, often coloring its impartiality. ●

Farrell Meisel is a California-based international broadcaster and consultant. He has worked in Russia, Europe, Asia, Turkey, the Middle East and the U.S. for over 30 years. Farrell recently completed a one-year assignment in Warsaw, Poland, for the News Corporation Company to set up, launch and manage the new TV Puls for its first year of operation.

PorchLight Entertainment



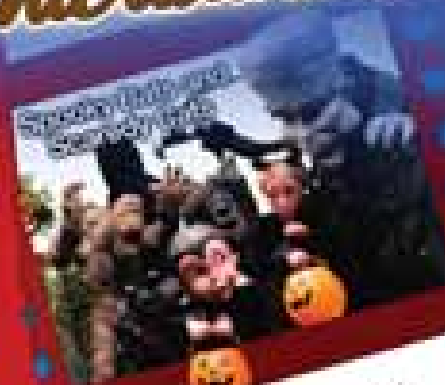
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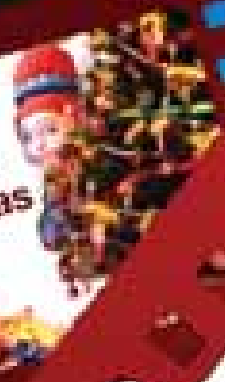
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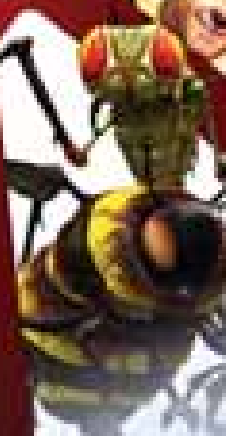
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Crisis Over Drama Is a Question of Deficits

BY DIETER BROCKMEYER

German commercial network Sat.1's TV Movie production *Die Hitzewelle* (*Heat Wave*) was declared a success after it aired this past February and garnered a 17.3 percent viewing market share in the so-called "relevant target group." In Germany, popular U.S. TV series such as *House* and *CSI: Miami* aired at the same time on competing networks, but had no chance of catching up in the ratings race.

This is a rare picture — not only for Sat.1 — especially in light of the competition between domestic German TV series with product originating in the U.S. Only TV Movies like *Heat Wave* and more expensive so-called "event" productions are able to move the preference bar up to score with German TV audiences.

Overall, German domestic TV series are faced with hard times these days. This debate has heated up recently, since commercial network RTL, the most watched channel in Germany, pulled part two of newly launched crime format *Die Anwälte* (*The Lawyers*) from the program schedule because the first part did not attract enough audience attention. German producers and directors, led by director Dieter Wedel, protested, claiming that channels like RTL are not giving domestic product enough time to develop their standing with their audience. "Good and innovative TV series need time to build up a relationship with their target group," Wedel said in an interview. Instead, the networks are opting for more cheaply produced game and casting shows that still draw their audiences easily. RTL, for instance, scores top ratings with the



GSG9 or Special Unit

German adaptations of *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire*, hosted by popular presenter Gunther Jauch, and *Pop Idol*.

However, Roger Schawinski, former managing director of Sat.1, draws a different picture. Last year, he published *Die TV-Falle* (*The TV Trap*), a critical book based on his experiences managing the ProSiebenSat.1 Media Group. He is considered a German TV expert who knows the market inside and out. Currently, he is launching a new radio channel in his home country of Switzerland. "After the new

then most newly launched German TV series have struggled. *Post Mortem*, a German RTL series based on the forensics hype created in the U.S., recently launched season two, and has very slowly built up its audience. Still, it's not doing all that well, averaging a viewing share between 13 or 14 percent in its target group. Also, the first episode of public broadcaster ARD's newly launched crime format *Mord mit Aussicht* (*Murder With a View*) performed well below expectations. Despite this, the new season of *GSG9*



Sat. 1's Heat Wave

generation of TV series produced in the U.S. with almost big screen budgets, German TV series do not have a chance anymore. Those budgets can no longer be recouped in the domestic market," he stated.

During his Sat.1 period, Schawinski said he witnessed the start of the downfall of the German TV series genre with the channel's production of *Blackout*, which told the dark story of two dissimilar police officers. Loved by critics and pushed into the market with a large marketing budget, the series never found its audience. From that Schawinski draws the conclusion that certain topics don't work anymore. The network concluded that the failure of *Blackout* was more a matter of placing it at the wrong time in the schedule rather than general disinterest. However, since

(or *Special Unit*), based on the German anti-terrorist force of the same name, had a fairly promising launch on Sat.1.

"Germany has to stop simply copying successful story and format ideas from the U.S. and develop its own ideas," said an international audiovisual production consultant who asked not to be named. She also contradicted the opinion that Germany couldn't generate competitive budgets for the international market. "Of course these high budgets cannot be recouped in Germany. However, such a change in the perspective is difficult to accomplish in the traditional German business structure, where the rights of a domestically produced TV show are completely owned by the TV network," she analyzed, before adding that in the world of big "event" TV movie



Jens Richter of SevenOne

productions, the perspective has already changed. For instance, ProSiebenSat.1 Media's international sales branch, SevenOne International, is co-producing and pre-selling productions like its two-part event movie *Treasure Island*, which has a reported budget of about eight million euro. This type of thing is also possible for TV series, said the consultant.

"Most of our 'event' movies are internationally co-financed. This works because the productions work very well and are very expensive," said SevenOne's Jens Richter. He also stated that the demand for German TV series is big. "When the new Sat.1 telenovela *In Liebe Lena* (*Lena With Love*) was announced, we had requests for it a day later. We are watched very closely from abroad," he said, before adding, "They do have scouts here in Germany."

Irina Ignatiew of Telepool, which has some ARD and RTL output in its library, stated that she'd seen a tremendous interest in German TV series, especially in other European countries. "The new season of the long-running RTL action series *Cobra 11* is selling very well in Spain, France and Italy," she said. Also, interest in the above-mentioned series *The Lawyers* was big prior to the German launch. "There was some disappointment that there will be only eight episodes available," she said. "The small number of episodes is the only obstacle for selling the series abroad."

Richter concurred. "There are series that didn't work in Germany but do in other markets. We've seen the same phenomenon with some U.S. series," he said, adding, "We can sell German series very well. The question now is how future formats will do with German audiences and if there will be enough new product to be sold." While Richter was worried, Ignatiew was optimistic about the future: "It's a phase we are in. Eventually the situation will change again and the German audience will favor homemade product." ●



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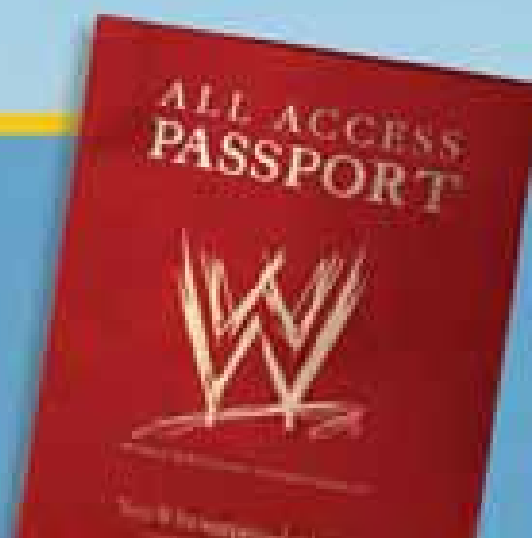
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U.S. Content Providers Getting High on Hi-Def

By KATHY TRACY

The pending U.S. analog shut-off in February 2009, and more affordable high definition television sets in American stores, are spurring increased production of HD television programming in the U.S. Currently, though, producers of non-scripted content have pursued the HD technology more aggressively than their scripted counterparts. According to David Poltrack, chief Research officer for CBS TV network, "Sports is the single biggest reason given for buying a high definition television, and it's the most mentioned form of programming in high definition."

ESPN executive producer Jed Drake said his network saw the trend as far back as 2004 and responded by making HD programming a priority. "We truly feel at ESPN as though we've been at the forefront of high definition, which has now become very much the standard of sports excellence, in terms of presentation," Drake said. "I do believe that we've helped significantly advance the industry in that." He uses the cable net's NASCAR programming as an example. "Every NASCAR race that we do, every camera, including the onboard cameras, is in high definition."

Likewise, other cable and satellite channels are in the market for international sports programming in HD, such as football (soccer).

High definition has also given nature programming new appeal. Patrick Morris, who produced *Galapagos* for the National Geographic Channel, noted, "I look at the high definition screen, and I see details I didn't even see when I was there. It's such a boon for wildlife. I mean, it just makes the images so gorgeous and cinematic." The technology also provides a practical advantage in that more footage can be shot. "What's been great is working with high definition tape capturing animal behavior. Being able to run that camera, sometimes waiting for that sort of snatch moment when a piece of wildlife behavior may happen, that's partly the reason that shooting ratios have been increased."

Ironically, the very advantages HD



CBS' David Poltrack

offers non-scripted programmers have proven to be challenges for scripted fare. The clarity of high definition can bring out unwanted details when it's an actor's face filling the screen. As a result, careful make-up application becomes more necessary. Plus, high definition means longer takes. Kim Delaney, who stars in Lifetime's series *Army Wives*, which is shot in HD, said at a press conference promoting the series, "The big difference for me is you don't cut. You just keep shooting and shooting and shooting. So you do have to have some kind of parameter there where you take time to go back to the beginning." Although her cast mate, Catherine Bell added, "It's much easier. You don't have to wait for reloading and that kind of stuff."

Army Wives producer Mark Gordon pointed out that HD required new skills for crew members. "Directors of photography need to learn the process. It's not the same way of lighting. And that's the biggest issue. We color-correct the show — or a big part of it — as we are shooting it." There also remains a quality issue for many primetime producers, said Gordon. "Some shows at this point in time are appropriate to be shot in HD, and some still need the richness of film. There is some savings in shooting in HD, and, as the process and the technology gets to be greater, we will find the sort of colors and the

range of colors that you can get in HD getting closer and closer to film. We are not there yet. So although everyone says, 'Oh, it looks exactly like film,' it doesn't look exactly like film. But it can be rich and beautiful. So I'm very excited about it."

CBS' Poltrack believes that the most popular series will benefit the most from being produced in HD, noting, "It's shows like *Lost* and *CSI* that really are the most enhanced by high definition television." He said that according to the network's research, "Most people say they continue to watch the same, whether they have a high definition TV or not, but a significant number of people say they start watching more television when they get their high definition sets. Almost half of them say they now purposely look for high definition programs. And we also know the shows they watch. The *CSI* franchise is recognized by high def owners as using the medium most effectively. And they actually watch some shows less because they're not in high definition. And a quarter of the people say they're watching television more as a family now because what happens is everybody wants to watch on the good set. It's not necessarily a smooth transition but the networks, and CBS in particular, are really up front with high definition programming."

Independent of the analog shut-off,



HDnet's Mark Cuban

HD has become a sought-after technology. Poltrack noted that among both early adopters and the so-called old school — people who had the least amount of technology — "the one piece of technology that they did not have that they most wanted to have was a high definition television." That said, his research also showed many consumers were waiting to make the purchase. "This is a very smart public. They know that the prices of HD sets are going to go down. And to the extent that they know that 2009 is coming, their philosophy basically is, 'I'm going to wait till 2009 because the sets are going to get better and the prices are going to get lower.'"

But Mark Cuban, founder of HDnet which produces all-HD content all the time, said that HD technology doesn't replace some basic business fundamentals, such as compelling content. "Right now people are so fixated on digital media, they forget about the opportunity that good old television presents. And when you combine some of the basics of television with high definition, with high resolution, with audio, you will draw viewers. And that payoff will be what allows us to have an impact." ●

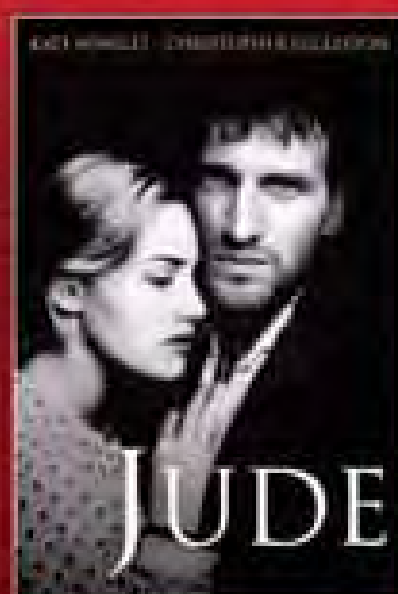
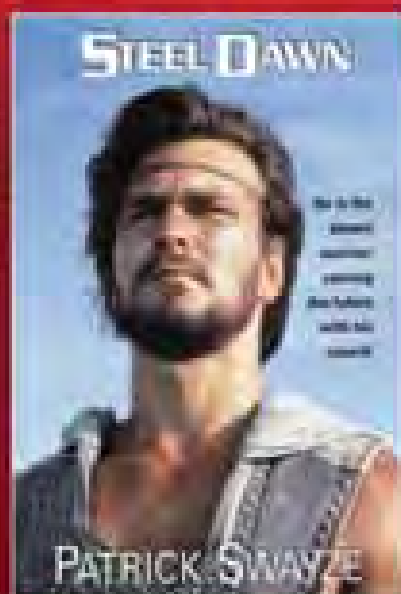
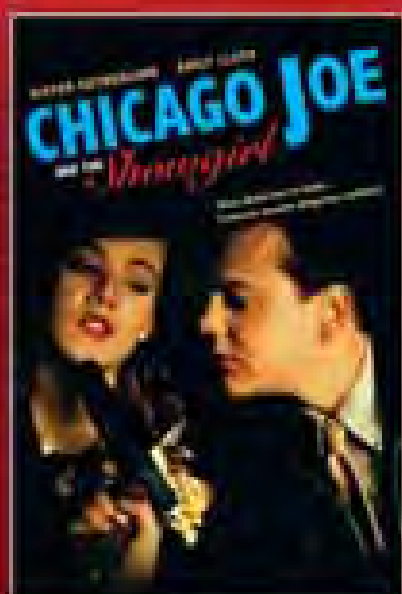
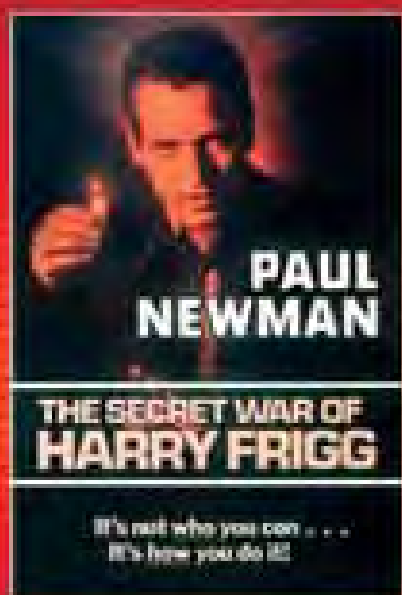
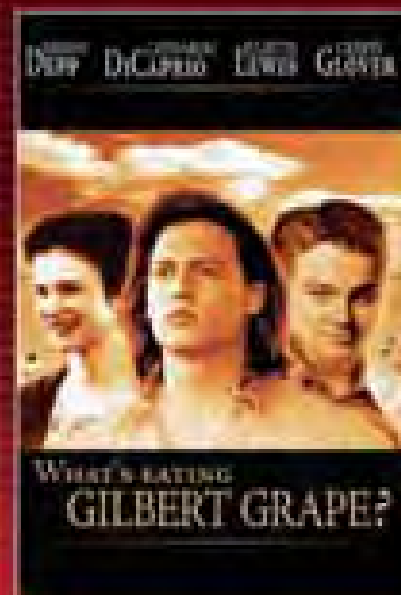
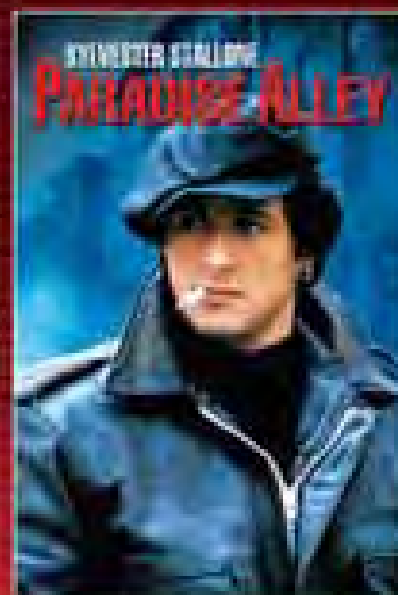
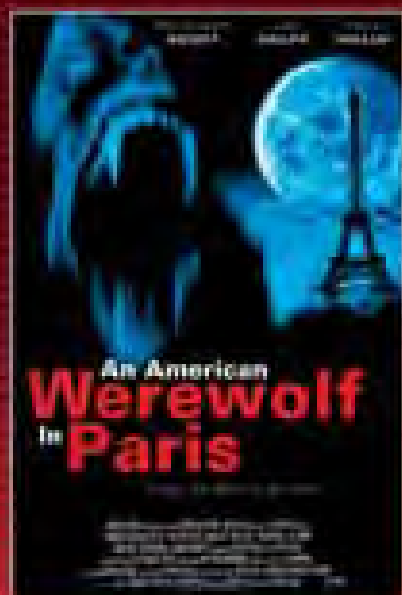


Lifetime series *Army Wives*

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Hollywood Goes EST

BY LEVI SHAPIRO

Screenwriter William Goldman famously remarked that in Hollywood, “no one knows anything.” While most interpreted that remark to mean, “Studio executives are [expletive],” Goldman was actually describing the difficulty in predicting a hit. Today, that phrase could just as easily be applied toward selling downloadable video via the Internet, or Electronic Sell-Through (EST). At the moment, studios and TV networks are using EST as an ancillary advanced media platform.

Among the major American TV networks, ABC was early to this sector. Since October 2005, ABC has sold nearly 35 million TV show episodes via iTunes. Karen Hobson, vp of Corporate Communications at Disney ABC Television Group, described ABC's strategy as a combination of delivery platforms. “Consumer-paid [EST] lives in harmony alongside our ad-supported content at ABC.com. There is no advertising of any kind on iTunes, and prices range from \$1.99 per

It may be true that for Electronic Sell-Through, “no one knows anything.” What is clear is that the consumer will help lead the discussions on what the new business model should be.



Curt Marvis, CEO of CinemaNow

episode to \$34.99 for an entire season.”

In January, Apple extended its video offering with iTunes Movie Rentals. The service carries over 1,000 movie titles, priced at \$2.99 for library titles and \$3.99 for new releases. NBC may have pulled its TV shows from iTunes last year, but its sister company, Universal Pictures, continues to partner with Apple. According to Michael Bonner, svp, NBC Universal Digital Distribution, “the next few years will be about the convergence of the PC and TV. NBC is looking for partners that are willing to be flexible about developing innovative packaging and pricing models. We launched on Amazon eight months ago with seven different brands and 90 television series. We want to get our content across in as many ways as possible while protecting the core business.”

Since 1999, the core business at California-based digital video distribution company CinemaNow has been Electronic Sell-Through. Curt Marvis, CEO of CinemaNow has learned the hard way what the industry needs for market growth. “Two things need to happen,” commented Marvis. “Ubiquity of content and a consumer-friendly price point. This is the Holy Grail and it will happen in the next two-to-four years.”

That wasn't soon enough for Web-based video-on-demand service,

MovieLink, which raised over \$100 million from Warner Brothers, MGM, Paramount, Universal, and Sony but sold to Blockbuster last year for less than \$20 million. More recently, Blockbuster ponied up \$2 million to Paramount during the Christmas period for an exclusive 10-day window in which to offer Paramount's *Jackass 2.5*. According to Alex Carloss, evp of Digital Media at Paramount Pictures Digital Entertainment, “This was a win-win for both companies. We exceeded our download projections. *Jackass 2.5* was also the number one download on iTunes for several weeks. We have found Electronic Sell-Through to be another way to reach the younger demographic. It has been excellent for films in the catalogue like *Zoolander*, *School of Rock*, *Mean Girls* and *Jackass*.”

While studios and networks continue to experiment with EST, others continue to champion subscription and ad-supported business models. Starz Entertainment's evp of Advanced Services, Bob Greene, believes “Subscription will still be the dominant delivery mechanism for long-form content like movies. Over time, this will grow, but at this point EST is a blip on the radar screen in terms of the impact on rights holders.” Two years ago, Greene oversaw the launch of Vongo, a subscription service that delivers movies and other video content to PCs and portable devices. “The



Bob Greene of Starz



Michael Bonner, svp, Universal Digital Distribution

market has evolved very quickly. This is really all about interoperability... providing ease of use with a DRM-invisible product.”

Hulu and Joost espouse an advertising-supported approach. “We can't really compete with *free*,” said Christina Lee, director of Corporate Communications at online VoD service Hulu. Launched in a private beta version last October as a joint venture between Newscorp and NBC, Hulu offers premium content from hit TV shows, as well as Sony and MGM films, with embedded commercials. “We are



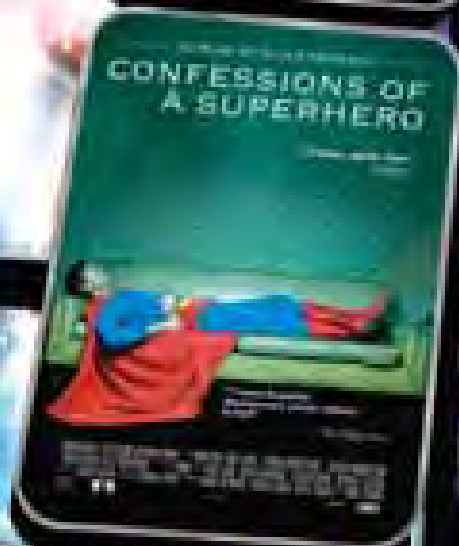
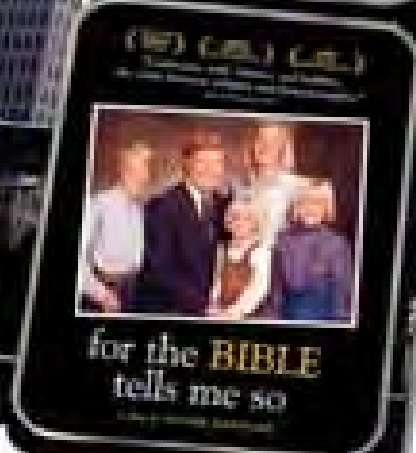
Jackass 2.5

trying to aggregate all of the world's premium content, making it easily available and on user's terms,” she said. Hulu can be seen through partners like MSN, MySpace, AOL, Yahoo, Comcast Fancast, as well as via the self-service model in individual blogs. “Traditional television has demonstrated that people are willing to watch advertisements within premium content. We have our own ad sales team that is working with advertisers and listening to consumer feedback. This is more Silicon Valley than Hollywood,” said Lee, noting that Hulu CEO Jason Kilar came from Amazon.

It may be true that for Electronic Sell-Through, “no one knows anything.” What is clear is that the consumer will help lead the discussions on what the new business model should be. ●

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Monetizing Actors: Hopefuls Are the Sums of Their Parts

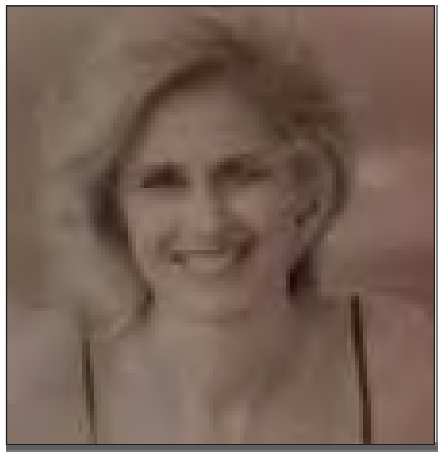
In 1999, London's *The Sun* and the *New York Post* ran articles reporting that singer/actress Jennifer Lopez had taken out a billion dollar insurance policy on her most valuable asset — her butt. Although she later denied the claims, the rumors revealed a key fact about the acting profession: success takes not only talent, determination and luck, but also the know-how to market and monetize every aspect of one's body.

The plight of an actor has never been an easy one. The industry is unpredictable and the competition is stiff. The odds of making a living as an actor — not to mention becoming famous — are not very good, and are getting slimmer by the year. In 2006, the U.S. National Labor Bureau estimated that there were about 70,000 employed actors in the U.S. This figure is projected to increase to a minimum 78,000 by 2016. And these statistics do not even take into account the multitude of unemployed aspiring actors who currently make up the wait staffs of restaurants and coffee shops in New York and Los Angeles, and those who perform in “non-traditional” roles, such as adult videos and as entertainers at children's parties.

For those actors who are lucky enough to consider themselves employed, the work is unstable and the median wage is about \$25,920 a year. In expensive cities like New York and Los Angeles, such an amount is barely livable. In order to succeed, actors must exploit every resource they have.

But there are ways for actors to monetize more than just their acting abilities — resources that they have that are surely more marketable than their table-waiting talents. Like many things in the entertainment industry, the monetization of oneself begins with an agent. With enough talent, conventional agents are easy enough to secure. And within larger agencies, actors signed to the commercial or legit (television and movie) departments often ask to be shilled out to the voiceover and promo departments if they are not booking enough jobs.

Voiceover, as unglamorous as it



Parts Models' president Dani Korwin

seems, can be a very lucrative option for actors who aren't quite making it in the on-camera world. Not only does it pay anywhere from a couple hundred to thousands of dollars a gig, but voiceover-recording sessions are brief and easy (30 minutes per booking is standard), and voiceover is a skill that can be developed.

Linda Weaver, co-owner of New York-based Access Talent, an agency that specializes in voiceover, pointed out one thing that makes voiceover such a good moneymaking option for actors is that it can be learned. “Having a ‘good voice’ is somewhat important,” she said, “but being skilled in the techniques of how to sell a product and remain ‘real’ is more important. The ears of an actor must be acutely trained to be able to hear his or her voice without judgment and to adjust to the nuances of what a producer is asking them to give.”

Like many agencies of its kind, Access Talent's roster is made up mostly of theatrical and legit actors using voiceover to boost their income. However, Weaver commented, “It has become more and more difficult for performers to make a living from voiceover, due to how many people have entered this area of the business.” And although Weaver and her colleagues work hard to market their clients through their company's website and by speaking to casting directors, it always comes down to an actor's ability to sell himself.

Another option for thespians looking to make their rent is modeling. Monetizing every element of an actor is

not just for starving artists. Indeed, famous actors, singers and models are often seen “licensing” their hair (like *Sex and the City* star Sarah Jessica Parker for Garnier Fructis shampoo), or face (like Carla Bruni for Fiat, a car manufacturer). For those who are literally willing to “give their right arm” to make it, there is so-called “parts modeling.” Hand, leg and foot models are in constant demand for commercials, print ads and editorial campaigns.

Dani Korwin, president of New York-based Parts Models, an agency that deals with practically every body part but faces, confirmed that while “some of [their] models are regular fashion and beauty models, others are actors who also happen to have beautiful body parts.” Korwin went on to say that the two businesses are very much intertwined and that parts models are more prevalent than people think. “If you count the number of hands or legs or feet with products in editorial content and on TV commercials you understand how important an aspect it is,” she said.

But though it may seem easy, this type of modeling demands obsessive attention to a specific body part. “Models have to be extremely careful with any part of the body used for



Hand model Ellen Sirot

photography,” said Korwin. “If a hand model gets a scratch on her hand it could knock her out of a photo shoot. So they have to be really careful in everyday life.”

Ellen Sirot, a top hand and foot model who is represented by Parts, is the poster girl for the meticulousness required of parts models. In an interview, Sirot confessed to owning around 500 pairs of gloves and wearing sneakers on her wedding day to preserve her prized appendages. In her day-to-day life, she refuses to cook, clean or even high-five her young daughter. But for Sirot and other top-tier models, whose hands pull in several thousand dollars per booking, such attention to detail more than pays off.

Sirot is not alone in her willingness to make sacrifices to succeed in the industry. Throughout the entertainment world, an actor's value is literally the sum of his parts. Smart actors know they must try to cash in on everything from their looks to their voices to their pinky toes. And in order to do so they must be willing to do everything short of spending a billion dollars to insure their rear ends. **ES** ●

WHAT ACTORS CAN MONETIZE

ACTING ABILITY

NON-SPEAKING PARTS (COMMERCIALS, CAMEOS)

VOICE (VOICEOVERS, DUBBING)

FACE

HANDS

FEET

HAIR

LEGS

SMILE

FULL FIGURE

LOOKS (VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS)

SIGNATURE (ENDORSEMENTS)

PRESENCE (AT VARIOUS OPENINGS — E.G., PARIS HILTON)

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Moving With The Times: From Show Biz To Shoe Biz

Perhaps because of the U.S. writers' strike that threatened to cripple the entertainment industry and despite the decision by a number of major studios to abandon the convention floor in favor of suites, the recent 45th annual National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE) event, which took place in January at the Mandalay Bay Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada, is being hailed a success. *VideoAge* checked in with a number of exhibitors and NATPE insiders to learn what really happened in Sin City.

The strike brought out program buyers from major territories such as Canada, the U.K. and Spain — buyers that were sorely missing at recent editions of NATPE. Since they were all concerned about the new U.S. TV season and the related L.A. Screenings, they went to Vegas to meet with studio reps to iron out their plans.

"There are things that you can't control, such as the strike and the general business climate, which isn't so great," said NATPE president and CEO Rick Feldman. "But people told us the conference was easily navigable. The sessions were pretty full and most people liked the new lounge on the upper floor. So we know we did a really good job."

However, the fact that the sessions



Dori Media's Nadav Palti and Michal Nashiv



Artear's Diego Piasek and Luciana Egurrola with Premium Media's Blanca Ponce (center)

were full and the convention floor was not caused some resentment among exhibitors. When an NBC-Universal executive was asked if the studio would exhibit next year, he pointed to the less-than-crowded floor and said: "Take a look around. We're only in the second day!" Carsey-Werner's Herb Lazarus was also critical of the seminars, which pull people from the floor, especially, as Lazarus pointed out, "considering that it's a two-and-a-half day convention." Indeed, after the second day, many people skipped town.

A number of domestic studios chose not to exhibit at this year's market, but many domestic representatives were in the area and some were even taking meetings — a situation that upset NATPE organizers. Regardless, NATPE decided to celebrate its past glory days of domestic syndication (which used to be the event's focus), by organizing the fifth annual Brandon Tartikoff Legacy Awards, which gives prizes to U.S. domestic TV executives.

Even though the domestic studios were not prominent at this year's edition, some of the biggest news at the market came from a domestic exhibitor, Program Partners, which announced plans for *Marie*, a new entertainment/lifestyle talk show starring television personality Marie Osmond. Program Partners will offer the hour-long series in syndication beginning in fall 2009. "Marie is a true original," said Program Partners' Ritch Colbert. "And *Marie* the series will be every bit as much a winner as she is. This is the kind of project that stations have been waiting

for, for a very long time."

Another talked-about announcement was Lightworks Enterprises' declaration that Sandra Carter Global (SCG) and Sandra Carter International have merged their programming into Lightworks Program Distribution (LPD). Sandra Carter was named executive vice president, Business Development, while John Cuddihy became LPD's president and managing director.

Much attention was bestowed upon Jeff Zucker, president of NBC Universal, who kicked off NATPE's opening day "Think Tank" with a keynote address, predicting that the tumult of the last quarter is "likely to continue" saying that the writers' strike was only one of many problems that plague the U.S. TV industry. "Maybe what we are going through now is our version of a forest fire," said Zucker, predicting that though the strike had devastating consequences for thousands of people, it "cleared the ground for robust growth" in the coming years.

Zucker went on to say that there was an upside to the strike, in that it provided an opportunity for TV companies to examine wasteful habits. In particular, he pointed to the pilot process, in which major networks have participated for years. He promised that NBC is still "committed to as much scripted programming as possible," but said that the network will drastically cut back on the number of pilots it plans to develop this year and beyond. Instead of pouring its resources into 80 or so



Raphael Correa Netto at the Globo TV International breakfast

pilots, said Zucker, NBC will limit the new season to just a handful of shows.

At *VideoAge*'s traditional NATPE breakfast (which was quite a packed affair this year), editor Dom Serafini outlined the importance of "Independents' Day" at the L.A. Screenings — a full day of general screenings, meals, conferences and parties, set to replicate the studios' own L.A. Screenings environment — which will be held on Thursday, May 15 (a day after the end of the upfronts in New York). "If this doesn't happen, the L.A. Screenings simply won't be viable for independents," said Serafini to a room that included representatives from Lightworks, Carsey-Werner, Granada International, Ledafilms and more.

"We support this Independents' Day fully. It's something that should go on for years and years," said Feldman of NATPE, which of late has become an independent-driven market. In fact, Feldman believes in the idea so strongly that NATPE will co-sponsor the "Independents' Day" luncheon. Serafini said he hopes that once the idea proves itself a success that NATPE will one day take the reins from *VideoAge* and run "Independents' Day" by itself.

NATPE's numbers were down about five percent from last year, when the market drew 7,700 participants. Numbers were up for Brits, however, with about 17 exhibiting companies this year. Saralo MacGregor, executive vp, Worldwide Distribution for London-based Fireworks, remarked that NATPE is vital because "more Latin American buyers attend this market than MIP-TV or MIPCOM." U.K.-based Power also increased its presence, adding representatives from its New Media, DVD and Latin



Lionsgate's Craig Cegielski, Sandra Stern, Kevin Beggs

(Continued on Page 34)

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NATPE Review [cont'd]

(Continued from Page 32)

American Sales teams to its NATPE contingent. Chris Philip, Power's president of Worldwide Sales, cited NATPE's placement at the start of the new year as one of its most attractive features. "It's essential," said Philip. "The timing is just right."

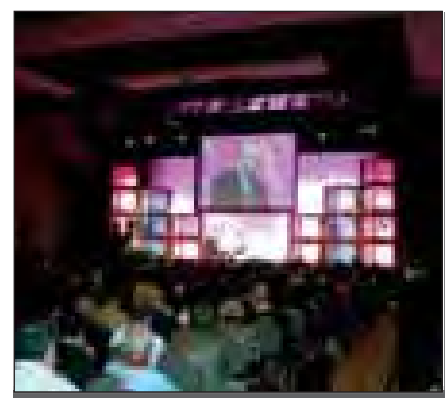
Canadians were also out in full force in Las Vegas, with 26 firms exhibiting at the event. "I love NATPE," said Jill Keenleyside, evp, Distribution for Toronto-based independent production and distribution company CCI

Entertainment. "It's a really concentrated market that focuses on the U.S., Latin America and, of course, Canada." The company opted to take a suite at the venerable THEhotel, but didn't completely abandon the convention floor. "The suite works well for us," said Keenleyside, "but it's important to have a presence on the floor, too, so we also took a table at the Canadian Pavilion."

While most market attendees were either on the floor or in the suites, Doug Murphy, president of Canada's Nelvana

Enterprises, was, as he put it, "hoofing it." Said Murphy: "I don't have a booth or a suite, just a very busy schedule. I'll bounce around and go fishing for more meetings. I'm the only person from Nelvana here. It saves money." He went on to say that he'd set up a number of meetings with folks from Asia and South America, because, as he said, "Europeans don't find Vegas appealing."

But it wasn't just a market for Brits and Canadians. Ken DuBow, president, Worldwide Distribution for Los Angeles, California-based Porchlight



Jeff Zucker's opening day keynote address

Entertainment, said that his main priority in Vegas was, of course, to see as many clients as possible. "Lots of U.S. cable buyers and cable development people and quite a few South Americans" were present at the market, DuBow said. "There are never that many Europeans at NATPE — except the big broadcasters. But any time you have the ability to see your clients, you must."

When asked if NATPE is still an important annual appointment to keep, DuBow was ambivalent. "My first NATPE was in 1980," he said. "I've watched it transform a lot over the years. It was a different business back then. Syndication, which it used to be about, is virtually nonexistent here now. But NATPE still has a place."

Marielle Zuccarelli, senior vp, International Distribution at Sherman Oaks, California-based GRB Entertainment, concurred. "We took a stand at NATPE this year," she said. "We didn't last year. But we've found that it's really cost-effective. It's much cheaper than MIP or MIPCOM and we're able to follow up with everyone we met with at MIPCOM."

Out of the 61 seminars that were offered, *VideoAge Daily* at NATPE identified a number of worthwhile sessions, including, "Reshaping the Advertising Measurement Ecosystem," which examined advertising industry trends; "How to Make IPTV Work," which featured Gilles BianRosa, CEO of Vuze, Inc.; "The New Distribution Model for Local Television," which took an in-depth look at recent, sweeping changes in local TV; and "Beyond the Telenovela: Original Latin American Programming," which invited speakers such as Dori Media's Jose Escalante and Globo TV's Flavio Rocha to discuss the other forms of programming that Spanish-speaking countries have to offer.

In terms of recreational activities, there were a few small parties in suites, a big one sponsored by Israel's Dori Media at THEhotel's Mix Lounge, and a breakfast organized by Brazil's Globo TV International. In terms of stars, Howie Mandel of NBC's *Deal or No Deal* was on hand to meet and greet. ●

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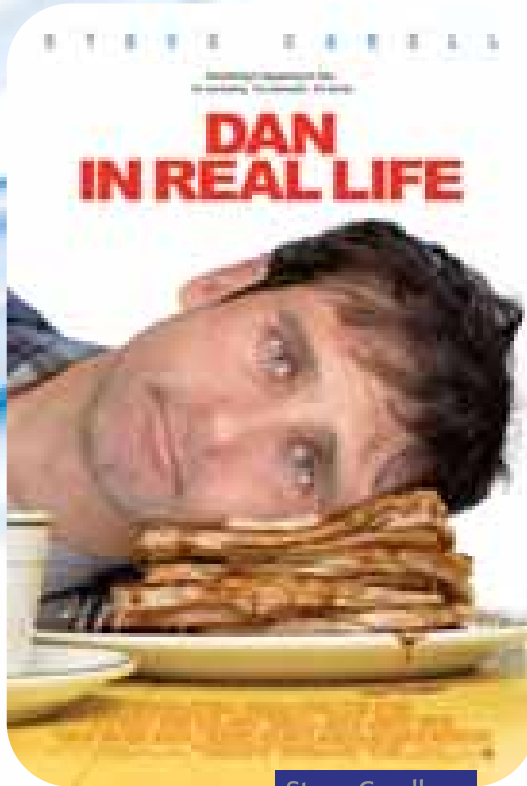
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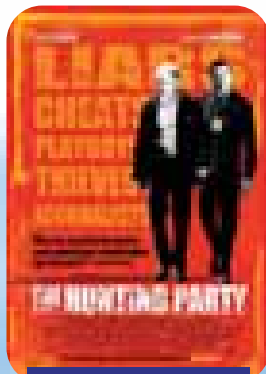
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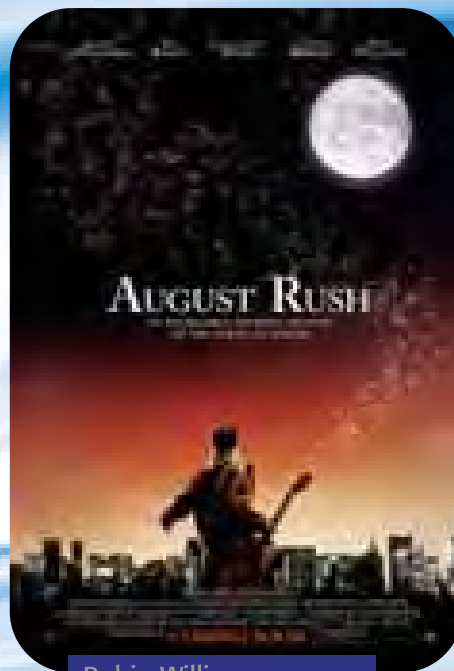
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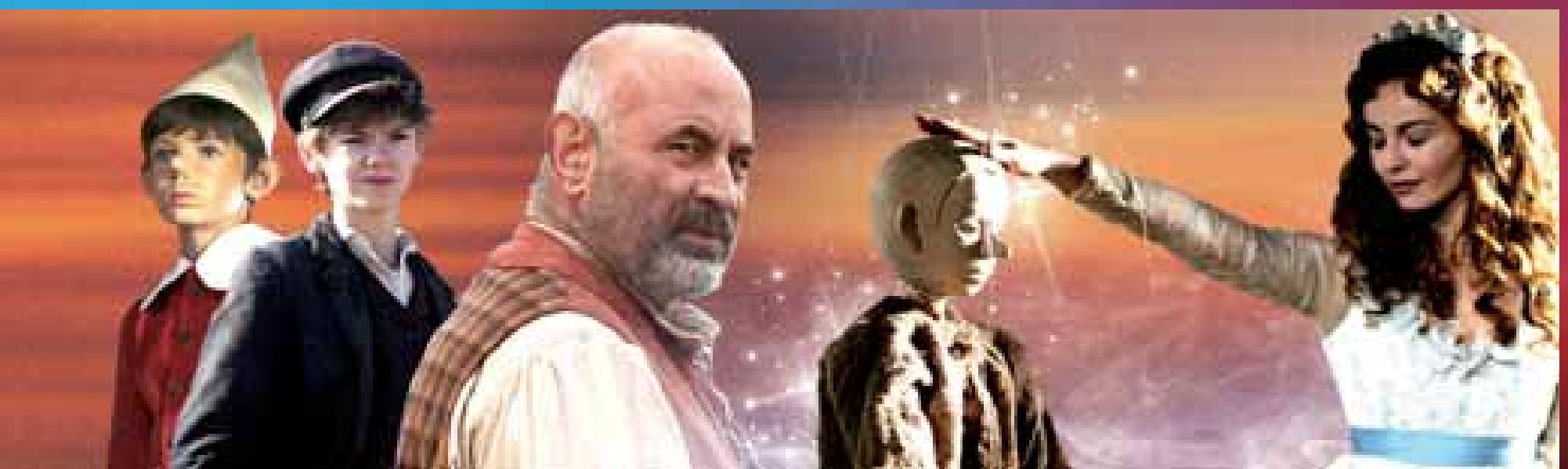
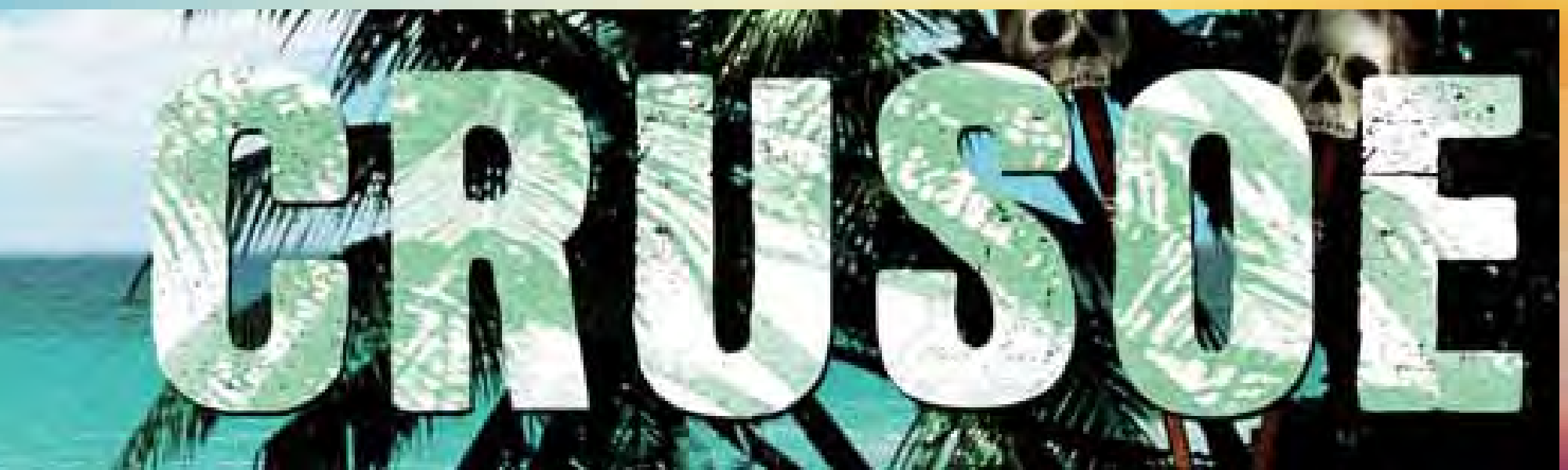
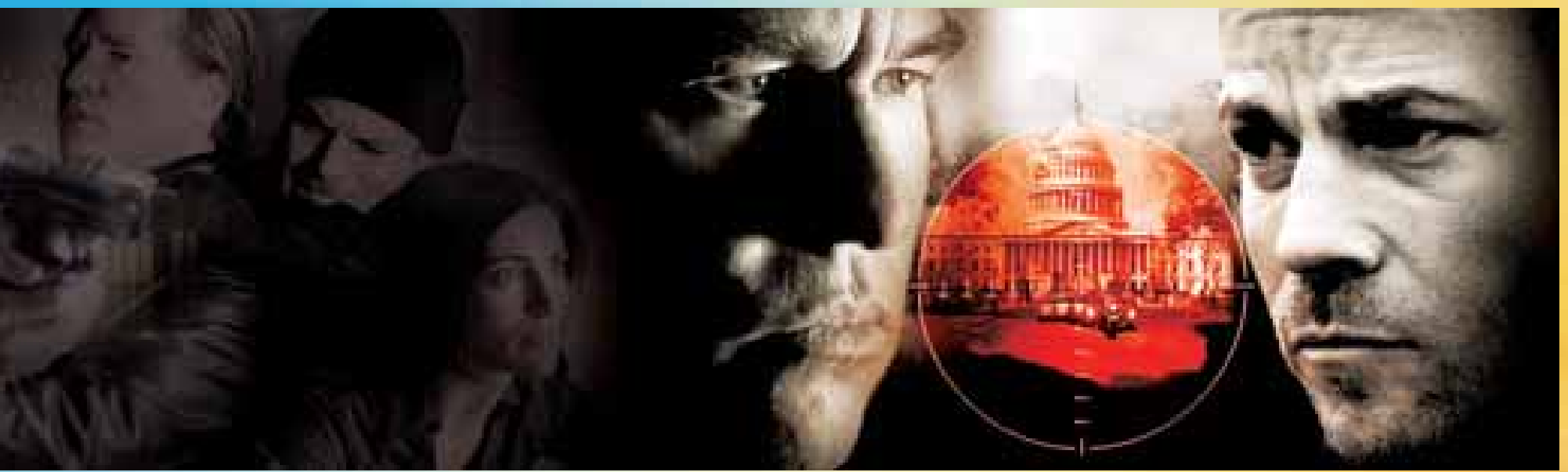
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Film Biz and Glamour Get a Big Bear Hug

The 58th annual Berlin International Film Festival came to a glamorous close in mid-February. The European Film Market — which took place alongside the Festival — was equally successful, and in expansion mode.

The festival, commonly known as the Berlinale, closed its curtains with an Awards ceremony in the Berlinale Palast before 1,600 special guests. The Golden Bear prize went to Brazilian Jose Padilha's *Tropa de Elite* (*The Elite Squad*), while the Silver Bear for best director went to Paul Thomas Anderson for *There Will Be Blood*. The festival, spanning 11 days, offered over 1,200 screenings and welcomed celebrities such as the Rolling Stones, Madonna, Penelope Cruz, Martin Scorsese, and *There Will Be Blood* star Daniel Day-Lewis, among others. Contributing to the event's success was its strategic position — close to the Oscars and far away from both the Cannes and Venice Film Festivals.

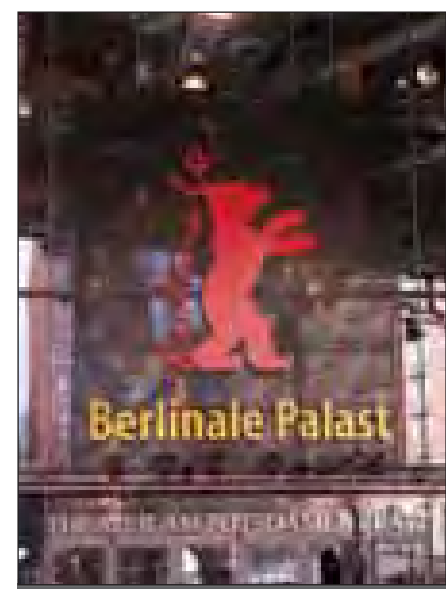
The closing figures for the market — known as the EFM, as if to challenge the AFM in Los Angeles, California — were a record 430 exhibiting companies, with the majority setting up shop at the Martin-Gropius-Bau (MGB) building, the main market venue. Another 40 distributors exhibited on the fifth floor of one of the sleek buildings on Potsdamer Platz, known as EFM Exhibitor Offices. A large number of film distribution companies exhibited in their countries'



Rai Trade's Carlo Nardello, Alessandra Sottile, Sesto Cifola at Spazio Italia



Lakeshore's Elizabeth Costa De Beauregard at her MGB stand



own umbrella stands, such as the Italia Pavilion, British in Berlin, German Films, Canada Sales Desk, Scandinavian Films and the Korean Film Council. The total number of acquisition executives in attendance was 1,073 from 54 countries, a three percent increase over last year. Business was brisk from day one with the hallways and large bar area on the MGB ground floor bustling with activity throughout the day.

An efficient system of shuttle cars connected the larger MGB venue with the Exhibitor Offices and Film Palast in the Potsdamer Platz hub and also guaranteed transportation to the hotels located in areas which were further away. Notwithstanding, some attendees felt that the long treks were somewhat of a problem, especially in cold weather — not an issue this year, but definitely brutal during previous editions. Imma Vitely, an acquisition executive from Italy's Mediaset/RTI, was one of those trying to frantically keep up with appointments scattered in different locations. Adding to the problem was the preference of some distributors to exhibit in hotel suites. A total of 60 companies were based in local hotels — mostly at the Ritz Carlton, Marriott and Maritime hotels. Melissa Wohl of California-based Allumination FilmWorks was very happy with her Maritime hotel location and confirmed having secured her suite for



Allumination FilmWorks' Melissa Wohl at the Maritime hotel



Screen Media Ventures' Michael Dwyer and Almira Malyshev at the Ritz Carlton

(Continued on Page 40)

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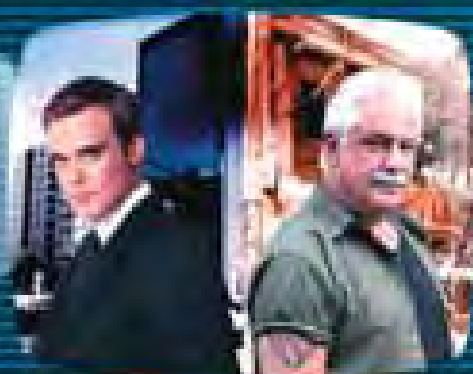
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EMOTIONS WITHOUT FRONTIERS

Berlin Report (cont'd)

(Continued from Page 38)

the next three years, as well as a hope that more buyers will actually stay at her hotel next year, an objective that the current hotel management is pursuing. Almira Malyshev and Michael Dwyer of Screen Media Ventures were also pleased with their posh Ritz Carlton suite, where about 20 other companies set up their offices. As with other similar film festivals-cum-markets, the business of selling movies went hand-in-hand with a dense schedule of screenings open to both professionals and the public.

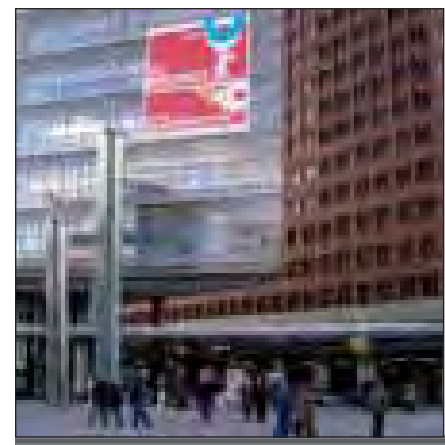
The Los Angeles-based IFTA, which



The Martin-Gropius-Bau building, EFM's main venue

organizes the AFM, coordinated Berlin's market presence with its members by distributing a directory of

IFTA exhibiting companies. It also held a special briefing on February 12 to divulge the results of a survey sent earlier to its members, which tackled the issue of returning the AFM market to its February-March date. Even though some AFM attendees considered the spring calendar date more appropriate than the current October-November date, the AFM management tends to favor the new status quo. The proponents of the spring date were, however, complaining that the questions in the AFM survey were confusing and tricky. **MG** ●



INTERNATIONAL JURY PRIZES

Golden Bear for Best Film

Tropa de elite (The Elite Squad)
by José Padilha

Silver Bear - The Jury Grand Prix

Standard Operating Procedure
by Errol Morris

Silver Bear - Best Director 2008

Paul Thomas Anderson
There Will Be Blood

Silver Bear - Best Actress 2008

Sally Hawkins
Happy-Go-Lucky
by Mike Leigh

Silver Bear - Best Actor 2008

Reza Najie
Avaze Gonjeshk-ha
by Majid Majidi

Silver Bear - Best Script 2008

Wang Xiaoshuai
Zuo You (In Love We Trust)

Alfred Bauer Prize 2008

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By Fernando Eimbcke

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Asyl - Park and Love Hotel
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An Affair Pour Les Affaires, Full of Action and Reaction

By LEAH HOCHBAUM ROSNER

Now that the U.S. writers' strike is finally, thankfully a thing of the past, the U.S. and international TV industry is ready to get back to business in a big way. The 45th annual MIP-TV, which will be held April 7-11 in Cannes, France, will be the first television market of the year to benefit from the end of the work stoppage. *VideoAge* checked in with a who's who of MIP-TV participants to find out how the now-defunct strike affected them and why MIP-TV continues to be one of the most important markets in the biz.

"April is critical for us," said Mark Cranwell, director of Content Acquisition for Babelgum, a next-generation global Internet TV network headquartered in Ireland, which plans to launch its site not long after MIP-TV. "So we're going to be on a buying frenzy at MIP." Babelgum will focus on acquiring programming relating to four main topics: nature and wildlife, travel, film and participation sports. "We have a mandate to have a lot of content on our system when we launch and there's no better venue than MIP-TV to get that done," said Cranwell. As for worries about the effects of the strike: "Maybe big studios will scale back their goodie bags, but since we're looking to license product that's already been produced, it won't affect us."

Oliver Kreuter of Germany's Bavaria Media feels that MIP-TV is one of the most important markets he attends each year. "MIP-TV is the big kickoff market for Europeans," said Kreuter. "As a TV producer, 2007 was the best year in the history of Bavaria Film. We were able to expand in large markets like Italy." In addition, Kreuter is excited to announce at MIP that Bavaria's *Storm of Love*, which he terms "the little Bavarian telenovela that could," has been picked up for an additional 200 episodes. *Storm* airs in 20 territories, including Italy, Austria and Finland.

Munich-based Studio 100's Patrick Elmendorff concurred with Kreuter that MIP-TV (as well as MIPCOM in October) are "the most important" markets for Germans. "There's no other

place where you can meet with that amount of international producers, co-producers and buyers in one spot." Studio 100 is coming to Cannes with a number of productions, including *Big & Small*, a puppetry co-production with the BBC and Canada's YTV and *Balloontoons*, an animated series from Russia. "We're interested in meeting co-financing and co-producing partners," said Elmendorff.

Marielle Zuccarelli, senior vp, International Distribution at California-based GRB Entertainment, which launched an acquisitions department last year, said she'll be at MIP in search of shows to acquire. "Right now I want to use our budget to invest in more product," said Zuccarelli. And while she won't have the time to attend any of the many conferences offered by Reed Midem at MIP-TV, Zuccarelli said she'd like to get better educated on new media and mobile rights if she can. "But mostly, I'm looking forward to sales."

So is Andrea Stokes of Canadian firm Canammedia, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. "We're bringing several new HD series and documentaries to MIP," she said, adding that MIP-TV is as important as ever since "it's imperative for us to keep in close contact with our international broadcasters. There's no better way than personal meetings at the market."

Personal meetings are the lifeblood of a market, after all. Mathieu Bejot of TV France International, said his company will once again organize its umbrella stand of French companies, and estimated that approximately 50 firms will participate. "Coming to the market with us gives companies more visibility," said Bejot matter-of-factly. "There's always traffic at our booth, so it's much easier to meet people."

Mark Gray, vp, Programming for FremantleMedia Enterprises in the U.K., said he's looking forward to a slew of one-on-one meetings. "MIP-TV is always going to be important for us as long as buyers go there," he said. "It's well organized and many countries are well represented, although there will probably be fewer Asians there than at other markets."

Regardless of this, Japan will be the country of honor at MIP-TV 2008. "Japan has always played an important role in our markets and more importantly, is a key player in the global entertainment industry, particularly in digital delivery," said Paul Johnson, director of Reed Midem's Television division. "The Japanese have also been some of our most loyal clients with their attendance at MIP-TV dating back over 40 years." Johnson went on to cite the fact that in 2012 the country will be the second-largest market for mobile television services behind the U.S. and



Studio 100's Patrick Elmendorff

ahead of Italy. Plus, nearly 60 percent of the world's animation is made in Japan. In addition, Japanese public broadcaster NHK will receive the Green World Award at MIP. The prize will be given in recognition of the network's continued commitment to raising public awareness on environmental issues.

This year's MIP-TV will feature a slew of seminars and conferences, including a keynote from Elisabeth Murdoch, chairman and CEO of Shine Group; "Fresh TV Around the World," wherein attendees can see clips from the world's most talked-about new TV shows; "Advertising & Media Seminar," in which advertisers explain how they communicate with an increasingly fractionalized audience, and more.

But for many, the conferences are viewed as a waste since they pluck buyers

MIP-TV and MIPCOM are the most important markets of the year. Some of the smaller, more targeted ones are great for specific clients, but MIP-TV and MIPCOM are still the granddaddies of markets.



Inside the Palais

(Continued on Page 46)

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MIP-TV Preview (cont'd)

(Continued from Page 44)



The Telefilms SA team in Cannes

from the floor, where they're most needed. As Herb Lazarus, president of Carsey-Werner International, the international sales and distribution arm of Carsey-Werner Distribution, said, "I feel like [the conferences] pinch on what we're there to do."

Because what they're there to do is business, after all. Greg Phillips, president of U.K.-based Fireworks International, a subsidiary of ContentFilm, said his company is going to the Palais with a slew of shows, including dramas *The Border* and *Heartland*, as well as its recently acquired

CBC product. "We have a new stand and a larger space this year," said Phillips, noting that Fireworks has relocated to the Sunset/Riviera Beach Hall. "We've been on the floor for years, but unfortunately, the space was just not large enough. So the opportunity to be in a new area was too good to pass up."

Jose Escalante of Israel's Dori Media Group is also enthusiastic about MIP. "This is the first market of the year where you can meet with the Europeans and the Asians," he said. "Because of the strike, a lot of people will attend and they'll be looking for product." And



Reed Midem's Paul Johnson

Escalante wants them to find it at Dori's stand. Additionally, Escalante is of the opinion that more Latins will be on hand this year than in previous years. "Normally, they go to NATPE and the L.A. Screenings, but this year, they may need to find other sources," he said.

One such Latin company that will be there will be the newly launched Buenos Aires-based Latin Flower Company, a distribution firm specializing in Latin fiction, which is led by Silvana D'Angelo, formerly of Telefe and Dori Media. Other Latin companies expected at MIP include Venevision International and Telemundo Internacional. Said Telemundo's Melissa Pillow "I'm looking forward to closing an important quantity of new deals in just five day's time — something that would be much more difficult during a normal work week."

Jon Helmrich, founder and president of International Broadcast Communications (IBC), a U.S.-based programming distribution and channel development company with offices in Los Angeles and New York, said that MIP-TV and MIPCOM are "without question must-attend markets for people who do what we do." He went on to say that a whopping 80 percent of IBC's sales happen as a result of the two markets. Anita Barnard, sales manager of London's 3DD, said she also finds that MIP is essential for her. "Other markets like the Asia TV Forum and DISCOP are more regional," she said. "MIP is more important because it touches on global trends."

MIP-TV 2007 drew a record 13,311 attendees, a growth of nine percent over 2006. There were 4,532 companies from 104 countries — an eight percent increase over the previous edition's 4,192 from 96 countries. In addition, the event welcomed 3,816 buyers. Reed Midem expects similar numbers for the 2008 edition.

As RHI's Joel Denton put it: "MIP-TV and MIPCOM are the most important markets of the year. Some of the smaller, more targeted ones are great for specific clients, but MIP-TV and MIPCOM are still the granddaddies of markets." ●

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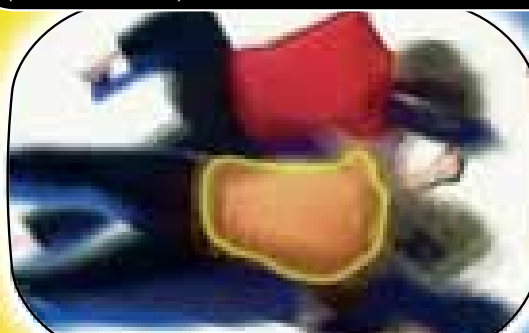
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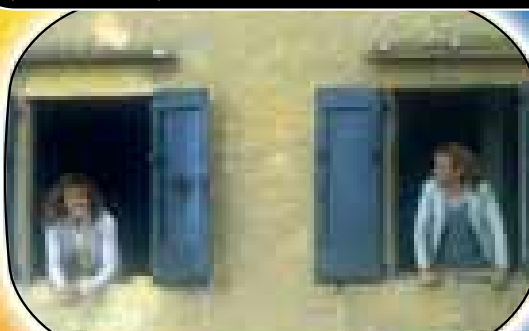
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Ingredienti di una leggenda

Directed by MARCO VENTURA



105'

Fuga con Marlene

Directed by ALFREDO PIRELLI



2 x 100'

I Vicerè

a film by ROBERTO FALDI



2 pilots
x 120'

Format
Albero Azzurro



4 x 100'

commissario
De Luca

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Fifty Percent of Advertising At MIP-TV Is a Waste

By BOB JENKINS

Look around you as you walk the aisles, the Croisette, or lounge in an insouciantly important manner in the lobby of the Martinez or Majestic and you will see one thing, if you see nothing else: Advertising. Whoever said, "It pays to advertise," would be in his element at MIP-TV. Aside from the stands, the leaflets, the hoardings, the painted cars, the bicycles and printed placemats, there are the magazines. Just like this one.

It might come as a surprise, but no one, not even Reed Midem, actually knows how many magazines are distributed at the market. But an informal survey of those buying advertising suggests that the figure is well in excess of 50 titles and that between them they carry a minimum of 1,500 to a maximum of 2,000 pages of advertising. The question, with all due respect to our Dom Serafini, is why? After all, every advertiser has a sales team, and every sales team will, if nothing else, make sure that every potential buyer is aware of their content and, if at all possible, views it. So you might ask yourself, if the buyer has viewed the content and decided against it, is one ad in such a plethora of advertising likely to cause them to change their minds? And, if the answer is no, then why advertise? The answer, unsurprisingly, is as complex as the business itself.

"Our marketing strategy," said Mark Levine, senior vice president, Marketing, Nickelodeon International (MTVNI), "reflects the creativity and innovation that drives our brands. During a market," he continued, "everything should be viewed as a potential marketing opportunity, and the more complementary they can be, the better." Levine was clear that, "Our marketing is designed to engage the client wherever they may be — from branded taxi receipts to branded people carriers we provide as a free shuttle service to clients. We strive to provide a great experience for both established clients and potential clients while at the same time ensuring great visibility."

Greg Phillips, president of Fireworks

International, a subsidiary of ContentFilm, believes that, "advertising in general, and print advertising in particular, does have a role to play in 'beating the drum' and creating awareness and excitement in general." And this ability of advertising to create a sense of well being and importance around a company seems to be far more important than any perceived ability to sell any particular title.

And markets such as MIP-TV and MIPCOM do seem to be the preferred vehicles for advertising spend. While Nickelodeon's Levine would not be drawn on specifics, he was prepared to offer the observation that, "MIP-TV and MIPCOM are very important content distribution markets for MTVNI, and we budget our advertising spend accordingly."

In a similar vein, head of Press and Marketing at the U.K.'s All3Media, Rachel Glaister insisted that, "the percentage of our annual advertising budget spent at such markets does vary," but she was also happy to acknowledge that, "the percentage spent at MIP-TV and MIPCOM is a significant percentage of the annual budget."

Not everyone approached was happy to talk to us on the record. Advertising budgets and strategies are, after all, understandably sensitive issues. But the general consensus of those who were prepared to speak on the record was that a daily publication was of much greater value than a "one-off" and the overwhelming consensus was that it is vital to "get in early." One senior PR person who was not willing to be quoted by name told *VideoAge*, "I



Greg Phillips, president, Fireworks International

would take one piece in one of the early editions of *VideoAge* Daily or MIP/MIPCOM Daily, rather than three pieces in any other magazine."

There was also a broad consensus amongst those to whom we spoke that the size of the magazine was also important. The majority view was that beyond a certain size, it became counter productive as people had neither the time to read a vast tome at the market, nor the weight allowance to take it home. And even if they did do one or the other, advertising became lost in the forest of print.

Then there is the question of cost. The view was that, for many magazines, a four-color, full-page ad would set a company back between \$3,000 and \$4,000 depending on the publication and the deal. Major companies with significant annual budgets able to commit to an annual level of spending obviously get better deals than companies buying single ads here and there.

But even so the general consensus was that the cost of advertising was at stable with deals available to major companies with significant annual budgets to commit, but with print advertising holding its place in a changing market place. The mood was perfectly caught by Fireworks' Phillips who commented that, "While there are ever-increasing ways of reaching our customers, for me, print still has its place. Although, along with all the others, it still lags behind getting on a plane and meeting your customers in person."

Nonetheless it is clear that print advertising is viewed as an important part of the overall promotional mix at events such as MIP-TV and MIPCOM. MTV's Levine summed up the mood, saying, "In general our print advertising choices are used to complement a wider marketing strategy which is always market specific," citing as an example, "our TODO TV campaign at MIPCOM 2007 highlighting our programming for our Spanish-speaking audience."

And that is the clear message: if you are doing it right, you are doing it everywhere you can, and that includes print advertising, as well as other forms



Mark Levine, svp, Marketing, Nickelodeon International

of promotion at markets. As Nickelodeon's Levine said, "At markets such as MIP-TV and MIPCOM, our marketing has a dual purpose, both to promote our products and portfolio of brands and to provide our clients with an MTVNI experience." And he is quite clear that print advertising is part of that mix.

For those still in doubt as to the value of advertising there is the comment of one buyer who told *VideoAge*, "I always count the ads companies are placing. The more they advertise the richer they are, and the less they need a deal. Which means I can't press them as hard on price. While by contrast those who don't advertise very much need the money and will almost certainly take a tougher deal."

You see, it's true — it really does pay to advertise. However, like the ad agencies like to say: "Fifty percent of advertising is a waste, but we don't know which 50 percent." ●

If you are doing it right, you are doing it everywhere you can, and that includes print advertising, as well as other forms of promotion at markets.

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Murdoch Family Values

(Continued from Cover)

For many of those years the favorite was Lachlan. For observers of matters dynastic, this must have been a tough decision. On the one hand, he had the very considerable advantage of being male, but on the other his sister Elisabeth had the temerity to be born before him. However, in July 2005 Lachlan resigned from his position with News Corp and ventured to Sydney, partly, according to reports, under pressure from his Australian wife Sarah and partly, according to an unnamed "executive who has worked with him" quoted in the *Financial Times*, because "he looked in the mirror and decided he did not like what he saw."

In the eyes of many, this ruled Lachlan out of serious contention, and when, in December of last year, James Murdoch, Lachlan's younger brother, stepped down from his position as chief executive of Murdoch's BSkyB in order to take control of all News Corp European and Asian operations, many thought that was game over. Especially as in 2001 Elisabeth had resigned as managing director of BSkyB following a very public falling out with Rupert's appointee, Sam Chisholm.

So, James is now a shoe-in to succeed Peter Chernin when the chief operating officer of News Corp's contract expires in 2009, right? Well, the answer has to be an unequivocal, "hmm, well, maybe."

Quite a lot can be said of News Corp's old chairman and chief executive, but even sticking to comments unlikely to



Elisabeth Murdoch

attract legal action, one can safely say that he can be capricious. Just look at his takeover of the then-Sky Television. By all accounts this was a move undertaken without any market research at a time when subscribers to British pay-TV operations were as numerous as sausage rolls at a bar mitzvah, and was one, which led to a hemorrhaging of cash that would have caused those of lesser constitutions to nuke the satellite.

And it is a mistake to think that Rupert has severed the link with Lachlan or Elisabeth. Lachlan remains on the board of News Corp, and is retained as a company advisor, and in January of this year BSkyB upped its stake in Elisabeth's Shine Group from 2.88 percent to 11.3 percent. Nor is that all.

In February of this year, Rupert gave all six of his scions U.S.\$100 million each in News Corp's shares. This generous gift was made via the Murdoch Family Trust, the body through which the 76-year-old controls News Corp. At the time of the announcement a statement confirmed that it was Rupert's intention to pass control of the trust to his four adult

children, no mention being made of the progeny of his relationship with Wendi Deng. Which is just as well as the trust was established as part of the divorce settlement between Rupert and his second wife Anna, mother of Elisabeth, Lachlan and James, in which she gave up a stake in her ex-husband's fortune to secure control of News Corp for her children.

Two other things are undeniably true of Rupert's personal relationships, and of the careers of the three children in question. Of the first, it has to be acknowledged that he is intensely loyal to those loyal to him, and of the second, it has been his habit to move his brood around his business empire. Usually, and probably correctly, this has been seen as a reflection of his desire for them to learn all aspects of the business. Elisabeth has run a major pay-TV



James Murdoch

operation, and now runs a major independent production company. Lachlan has run newspapers and free-to-air broadcasters in the U.S., and is now, through his privately owned Illyana's A\$3.3 billion deal with James Packer, son of onetime Rupert rival Kerry Packer, learning the casino business. And James Murdoch is combining Elisabeth's experiences with the earlier one of his older brother, as in addition to the pay-TV operations in Europe and Asia, he assumes control of News Corp's British newspaper titles.

So, is Rupert actually thinking that all three might have close to an equal role in his succession? The evidence is slim. But then that is true of speculation as to all of the possible options in the question of the Murdoch succession. But if there is little hard evidence of Rupert's intentions in this matter, there is also very little evidence of any of the acrimony that one might have expected had the family been



Lachlan Murdoch

made aware of an anointed one. There is a quote given by Rupert in a 1997 book, at the time when the received wisdom was that Lachlan was the chosen one. "He will be," said Rupert, "first among equals, but they will all have to prove themselves."

It would be difficult for anyone to argue that any of the three children in question had failed to prove themselves, and so maybe, just maybe, the game of "Spot the Heir," is a fool's errand. Maybe, there isn't a single Murdoch heir; maybe it's a three-way split. ●

Elisabeth Murdoch, chairman and CEO of Shine Group, will be the keynote speaker at this MIP-TV. She declined to comment for this story.

Is Rupert actually thinking that all three might have close to an equal role in his succession? The evidence is slim. But then that is true of speculation as to all of the possible options in the question of the Murdoch succession.



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L.A. Screenings

(Continued from Cover)



NBC Universal TV Distribution's Belinda Menendez entertaining program buyers at Universal Studios.

the L.A. Screenings' May dates are linked to the TV networks' upfront presentations in New York.

When, after the writers' strike settlement, the networks scheduled their upfronts for ad agencies and clients, the studios followed suit with the L.A. Screenings.

Despite all the networks' talk about scrapping the upfronts, they still have untold benefit, such as good publicity for the networks' new schedules. Positive buzz translates into more CPM (ad rates).

Ultimately, as far as calendar dates for both the upfronts and the L.A. Screenings were concerned, the writers' strike had zero effect.

What has been affected by the strike, however, is the number of pilots that international buyers will be able to screen in Los Angeles May 15 - 23. But we'll return to this subject later.

Something that was not taken into consideration, among the various doomsday scenarios, was what Los Angeles would have lost had the L.A. Screenings been canceled.

For the studios, international TV distribution is a year-round business. However, many deals close during the L.A. Screenings. It has been estimated that for the studios, under normal conditions, the L.A. Screenings could represent an event worth up to 60 percent of their annual revenues, even considering that several deals will take weeks or months to close.

But, in this big pot of gold, there are many more nuggets to pick, like the net worth to the trade press, consultants, coordinators and to the city itself.

For this latter entry, according to *VideoAge* estimates, the nine-day event infuses at least \$7 million into the local economy. This figure was reached by taking the peak attendance of 2,000

people, multiplying that by the length of stay per delegate (five days), multiplying that number by the average for daily expenditures per delegate (\$350, which includes lodging, transportation, food, shopping, etc.) and multiplying that number by a factor of 1.64, which yields a total \$5.74 million. The multiplier factor depends on the event profile and varies from 1.5 to 1.64.

The formula used was developed by Washington D.C.-based Destination Marketing Association International (formerly known as the International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus), as reported in *Meetings & Conventions* magazine.

In any case, those figures don't include expenditures by the studios, by some independent distributors for parties, presents, promotional materials and such, and even by the buyers that commission reports about the new season from local consultants. All of this would bring the total to more than \$7 million. Not bad for a market that isn't even organized!

At the L.A. Screenings, the length of stay per delegate is much longer than the average (which, according to a study, is 3.56 days per market) because of the nature of the event, which requires daily screenings followed by negotiations and end-of-show parties.

The part of the L.A. Screenings that adds more money to the whole local economy equation is the creation of pilots for the new U.S. season. According to a much publicized comment made by NBC-Universal CEO Jeff Zucker, the U.S. broadcaster could save as much as \$50 million a year by reducing its reliance on expensive pilots. This translates into a cumulative cost savings for the major TV networks of about \$200 million per year. Even though it is unclear how much of these savings would affect Los Angeles' local economy, the impact is nevertheless substantial.

Zucker said that nowadays, each pilot costs up to \$7 million (up from about \$3 million in 2005) and some never even air. In late January, ABC let some 40 scripts go, dropping the most projects of any U.S. network. With 29 pilots last year ABC financed the largest number of pilots, followed by FOX (25), CBS (21), NBC (20) and the CW (12). Of these 107 pilots, the networks picked up 66: a 61 percent ratio. This



CBS Paramount International TV's Joe Lucas, Armando Nuñez, Barry Chamberlain and VideoAge's Dom Serafini on the lot.



The Disney-ABC International TV Latin America team.

year, with talks of cutting the number of pilots in half, one could be looking at around 50 pilots, but with a better pick-up ratio. In recent years, in order to save money, many networks started using a straight-to-series strategy or requesting video presentations (which are less polished, shorter and cheaper than regular pilots) instead of pilots, despite the fact that many presentations have to be re-shot before going to series. For example, a big (e.g., expensive) action/crash scene could be omitted or done with a blue-screen background to save costs but to demonstrate how the show flows.

Reportedly, CBS' *Moonlight*, which premiered this past season, was ordered as a presentation. Similarly, the network's long-running series *Judging Amy* was also a result of a presentation. However, strange as it seems — since networks own their own studios — the studios prefer making pilots rather than presentations, because they get a higher license fee.

Another possible money-saving solution for networks and studios alike is to follow MGM's strategy of producing backdoor pilots, which are movies that have the potential to become TV series. Indeed, last February, NBC aired *Knight Rider* as a two-hour TV movie that could be used as a backdoor pilot.

As far as the L.A. Screenings are shaping up, one could expect that, because of the dearth of development, more of the current season's new shows could return this fall. In addition, since many new shows will proceed as compressed windows (i.e., when there is less time than normal to order, cast and shoot the pilots or presentations), the studios might not have footage of those series to show international buyers.

However, if broadcasters scale down the number of new series, there are always the cable networks, which accelerated their new season upfronts with initial meetings with ad agencies starting as early as February.

Even though the studios are happy

when networks order pilots, more appreciated are episodic orders. But, with all the cost-cutting measures implemented by the U.S. networks, studios are now reluctant to accept six-episode pickups, pushing instead for 13-episode initial orders, which are equally appreciated internationally.

To navigate through the networks/studios new TV season terminology maze, MGM's TV Distribution co-president, Gary Marenzi, offered to explain how the networks have traditionally placed their orders:

Script order: A pilot script plus a "bible" of several episodic synopses. The network usually pays 100 percent.

Pilot order: A video pilot or extended presentation to decide if the script concept works. The network usually pays an agreed-upon fee for this.

Series order: If the network likes the pilot, it will order the series (usually an initial six-to-13 episode commitment) and put it on the schedule. These are the shows that are presented at the L.A. Screenings.

Pickup: This means that the network extends the first season order of a show from the initial order to a full 22-episode season (usually). If the original order is 13 episodes, this can also be called "picking up the back nine" (13+9=22).

Renewal: This means ordering a second season of a show (past the original 22 or whatever the first season's total number of episodes was).

In terms of production schedules the pilot season begins in early February and ends around April 15. The episodic season, on the other hand, begins after July 4, picks up with full force mid-August, runs through the holidays and ends by Christmas. There are also episodics that run all year, especially on cable. ●



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2007 PRODUCTION - TELEDOCO

SWINDLERS

Short Series
(Farsantes) 13 x 1 TV HOUR
2008 PRODUCTION - PAMPA FILMS

THE TWO LIVES OF MR. PELL'S

Comedy
(El Exitoso Sr. Pells) 150 x 1 TV HOUR
2008 PRODUCTION - UNDERGROUND CONTENIDOS

**HIGH MOUNTAIN
BREAKING LIMITS**

Teen Telenovela
(Alta Montaña) 150 x 1 TV HOUR
2008 PRODUCTION - PAMPA FILMS

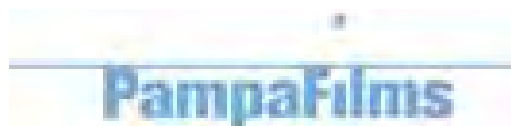


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Scenario Had The WGA's Strike Continued

BY DERMOT HORAN

So, the WGA strike is over, there is a new three-year deal in place, and a new scale of residual payments for DVD and non-linear broadcasting has been agreed upon. But what would have happened had the strike dragged on into the summer? *VideoAge's* Dom Serafini asked me, a buyer, to examine this doomsday scenario, and determine what the effects would have been for distributors and international broadcasters.

When the strike began in November 2007, the studios had completed approximately half of the 2007/2008 season of episodes. For those U.S. series that international broadcasters were planning to put into primetime slots, there would be a temporary stay of execution, but once these new episodes were played out, the situation would become critical.

Unlike most domestic drama productions commissioned by international broadcasters, the U.S. studios' and broadcasters' shows come in bountiful batches of 22 episodes per season once a show has proven itself successful. This allows schedulers to place a U.S. series into a slot for 22 consecutive weeks.

In the U.S. there is a tradition of running reruns sprinkled amongst the new episodes during the fall and winter season. Thus, between September and the following May, 22 new episodes are played over a 36-week season. This does not generally apply outside of the U.S., except in Canada. Most international broadcasters prefer to run 22 new episodes consecutively, and follow that with a brand new series of 22 episodes in the same slot.

So, while U.S. audiences were declining during the strike, American viewers were at least used to seeing reruns in December and January.

Most schedules need drama series to attract loyal and upscale audiences. Dramas are key viewing appointments. The production values of a drama outweigh those of any other form of programming.

Without an ongoing supply of U.S.

dramas international broadcasters would have had a number of choices: Buy repeats, off-net or library series from the U.S. majors; buy drama from other countries; commission cheap local programming.

Option One would mean inevitable and significant declines in ratings. Dramas in particular, don't repeat well in primetime. Library dramas can play a part in daytime television but would not work in peak hours. Finally, off-net material, which has not yet been licensed, is probably not worth picking up.

Option two would involve identifying dramas with sufficient volumes from other countries. Distributors from the likes of the U.K., Australia and Canada would definitely benefit, as would some from mainland Europe and Latin America. In some cases this would have been the first time many broadcasters would have scheduled non-U.S. dramas in primetime. These dramas would cost less and would be packaged with less material, thus offering a real alternative to buying from the U.S. majors.

The final option is one which more mainstream and bigger broadcasters would choose. Local productions tends to rate extremely well. Over time, successful local programming would replace U.S. series, which could struggle to re-establish themselves in broadcasters' peak schedules.

In all three scenarios the Hollywood studios' international distribution businesses would suffer terribly. There was a time until fairly recently that feature film slates were the main driver of packages from the U.S. majors. But nowadays drama series have become the leverage around which deals have been struck.

Now that the strike is over, a more compact pilot season is up and running. The sheer scale of previous pilot commissions will probably never return. And the L.A. Screenings is back where it belongs, immediately following the networks' fall announcements. U.S. series will once again form part of most international broadcasters' schedules.

Dermot Horan is director of Broadcast and Acquisitions for RTE, Ireland.

2008-'09 Network-Commissioned Pilots*

ABC

Comedy

Cedric

Laffer about a man who has difficulty adjusting when his wife's hobby becomes a million-dollar enterprise.

The Goode Family

Animated comedy from creator Mike Judge about a family obsessed with doing the "right" thing.

Literary Superstars

Centers on a literary publicist who fights for her authors while balancing her social life.

The More Things Change

Buddy comedy about four male friends whose friendship endures life changes such as getting married.

Untitled Kohan/Mutchnick Project

Workplace comedy about business partners: one straight, one gay

Drama

Life on Mars

Adaptation of a BBC series about a cop who wakes up 30 years in the past.

Section 8

A sci-fi drama from *X-Men* writer Zak Penn.

Reality

Untitled Tyra Banks/Ashton Kutcher Project

A joint effort from Tyra Banks and Ashton Kutcher for Warner Horizon, Bankable Productions and Katalyst.

Untitled Project Based on High School Musical

A competition searching for America's best performer.

CBS

Comedy

My Best Friend's Girl

Multi-camera comedy about two best friends who own a bike shop together, whose friendship is compromised when one starts dating the other's ex-wife.

Single White Millionaire

Tells the tale of a thirtysomething millionaire who decides it's time to settle down.

Worst Week

Chronicles the lives of a young couple who must survive their soon-to-be in-laws.

Drama

Can Openers

A female doctor and her fellow residents fight to survive the boys club that is the seventh year of a neurosurgical residency.

The Eleventh Hour

Focuses on a government agent that protects people from scientific abuses.

The Meant to Be's

Romantic drama centering on a young woman who dies, but must return to Earth to help people improve their lives before she's allowed to "pass over."

The Mentalist

About a mentalist who uses his abilities to solve crimes.

Mythological X

Focuses on a woman who is told by her psychic that she has already dated the man she will eventually wed. Desperate to learn who he is, she must revisit past relationships.

Ny-Lon

Tells the tale of a New York record store clerk and a London stockbroker who begin a trans-Atlantic romance.

Reality

Splitsville

Game show in which divorcing couples negotiate for possessions by competing in a variety of challenges.

Untitled Tom Forman Project

Centers on law enforcement officials assisting people who've been victimized by crime.

CW

Drama

How to Teach Filthy Rich Girls

Based on the book by Zoey Dean, the show follows a Yale graduate who is hired by a wealthy man to be a live-in tutor/life coach

for his granddaughters.

FOX

Comedy

Capes

A retired caped crusader runs a bar frequented by good and evil superheroes.

Outnumbered

Revolves around a family struggling to raise three overly intelligent children. Based on a U.K. format.

The Pitts

Animated comedy that takes an absurdist look at family life.

Sit Down, Shut Up

Animated show that centers on the faculty at the most dysfunctional school in America.

Starting Under

After a divorce, an opinionated man (Bernie Mac) is forced to live with and work for his introverted son.

Spaced

Laffer about a man and a woman who pose as a couple in order to score a cheap apartment.

Drama

Dollhouse

From the mind of Joss Whedon comes this action series about a female Jason Bourne who is stripped of her memories after completing missions.

Fringe

Sci-fi series about an FBI agent and a Mensa member/high school dropout who team up to identify paranormal activity.

Lie to Me

Former FBI agent Cal Lightman acts as a human lie detector to uncover people's secrets

Night Ride

Dramedy about a family man who decides to pursue his dream of becoming an EMT.

The Oaks

Follows a house through several decades and the families that have lived in it.

Queen Bee

Workplace drama focusing on a ruthless female CEO who corrupts a young woman by taking her on as her right hand.

NBC

Comedy Pilots

Man of Your Dreams

Multi-camera comedy about a womanizing bartender who decides to change his ways by helping women whose romantic lives are in disarray.

Zip

A conman schemes his way into the glamorous life of Beverly Hills.

Comedy Series (Picked up sans pilot)

Kath and Kim

Molly Shannon and Selma Blair star in a sitcom about a divorced mom and her self-absorbed daughter.

Drama Pilots

All Rise

A legal thriller about the hunger for success — whatever the cost.

Blue Blood

Cop drama starring *The O.C.*'s Logan Marshall-Green about the true stories of a Harvard-educated cop in his first year as a police officer in New York.

Kings

David and Goliath set in a meta modern world.

Knight Rider (2-hour backdoor pilot)

A modern take on the original series with a brand-new KITT and cast.

Drama Series (Picked up sans pilot)

Fear Itself

Fear anthology series.

The Listener

Chronicles 25-year-old Toby's struggle to lead an ordinary life while using his powers of telepathy to help others.

The Philanthropist

About a billionaire who uses his resources to help those in need — often at great risk to himself.

Robinson Crusoe

New twist on Daniel Defoe's classic tale.

*As of March 17



Good stories have no frontiers

PROGRAMS

VIDAS ROBADAS TAKING LIVES

Telenovela - 150 x 1 TV Hour
Telefe Contenidos - Llorente & Villarruel

Starred by Facundo Arana.
A love story committed to truth and justice.



COMEDY
140 x 1/2 TV Hour
Cris Morena Group / RGB

Bella and Benny hate each other because they are different, but afterwards, a great love arrives.



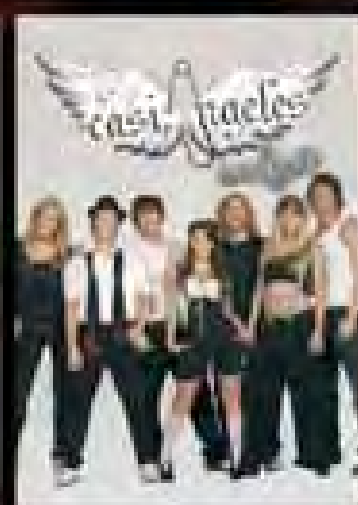
TELENOVELA
150 x 1 TV hour
Telefe contenidos / Endemol Argentina

An incurable seducer who panics with romantic commitment meets an extroverted girl who will enter his life to turn it upside down.



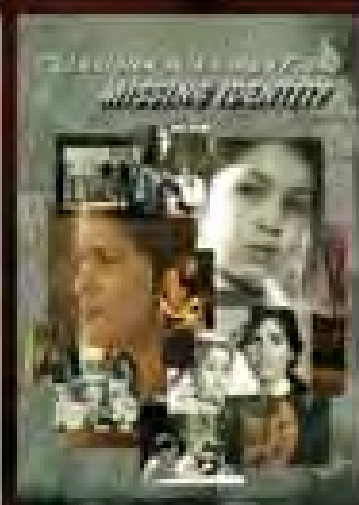
SERIES
26 x 1 TV hour
FOX Telecolombia

Stories in real time, in which different people face different key situations.
Shot in High Definition.



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Africa: TV's Last Frontier

(Continued from Cover)



Patrick Jucaud

Here's a clue. It's next door to another country, which is slightly larger than California, but has only one TV station.

No, it's not Europe in the 1960s, but Africa right now. The first country is Nigeria, and the second is Cameroon.

They're both pretty typical of Africa — an entire continent that has hardly been touched by television, even in the 21st century. Africa is TV's last frontier.

Even South Africa, the continent's only developed country, has only had TV for 30 years.

But one company thinks that's all about to change in a big way. The people behind DISCOP, the TV market for Central and Eastern Europe, will launch DISCOP Africa next year.

DISCOP Africa will be officially launched at MIP, said DISCOP's Patrick Jucaud. "It will be a hotel-based event from February 25-27 next year in Dakar, Senegal. We expect some 250 African stations to attend from just about every African country. Even Zimbabwean stations have expressed interest. They have never gone to MIP or NATPE [a DISCOP partner]. Only two countries, Libya and Tunisia, seem reluctant to come to DISCOP Africa."

A TV market in Africa? Most people in the Western world think people are lucky to scratch out a living each day in Africa. Do they even have time to relax by watching an episode of *JAG* before they go to sleep? Is Jucaud crazy? No. In fact, that's exactly what people said when plans for DISCOP were originally announced, according to Jucaud. After almost 50 years of Communism and Soviet domination, very few people

knew anything about those newly open countries. Would all those Czech tramcar fitters, Hungarian charcoal burners, Romanian coalminers, Ukrainian tractor drivers, and Bulgarian shoe factory slaves really want to watch *L.A. Law*, *Murphy Brown*, *Seinfeld* and *Jerry Springer*? And even if they did, how would they pay for them? "They said we'd get paid in vodka or women, that there was just no money there," Jucaud said.

Well, as the TV industry now knows, that just wasn't true. During the 1990s, commercial TV stations cropped up all over Central and Eastern Europe, all of them hungry for content.

Now, Jucaud said, 15 years after the first DISCOP event took place, the market for that content is valued at "several hundred million dollars from almost nothing."

The spur for that growth, of course, was the headlong launch of new commercial stations in the region after the fall of Communism. The main trailblazer was Central European Media Enterprises (CME), funded by multibillionaire cosmetics heir, Ronald Lauder.

I well remember CME's breakneck pace of launches. I still have a faded T-shirt with "CME Central European Tour" written on the back. The list tells its own breathless story: "Czech Republic — February '94, Romania — December '95, Slovenia — December '95, Slovakia — December '96, Ukraine — September '97 and Poland — October '97."

CME became a moneymaking machine. Its Czech station, Nova TV, made its \$10 million launch costs back in its first full year.

What will be the spark that sets off African TV? Jucaud may be right when he says growth has already begun. "We have had unbelievable interest from TV content and format distributors, and from African advertising agencies who say their clients need better programming if they're going to spend more money."

Industry figures on the size of the African TV market are hard to come by, said Jucaud, but he maintained that "African TV stations are really eager to make money, either now or in the future. It's an untapped market." New TV stations are being launched all over, said Jucaud.

But why?

Well, anyone who knows anything about Africa today need whisper only one word: China.

The sheer scale of Chinese investment in Africa has truly changed the continent.

And it's been going on for years

West Africa will see the earliest and fastest growth in the TV business on the continent. It has the greatest population, the biggest economy outside South Africa, and is relatively politically stable.

unbeknownst to the average Westerner, who only recently learned of China's interests in Sudan when the story made headlines in February. In the months that followed, Steven Spielberg pulled out of his planned role as artistic advisor to the Beijing Olympics, persuaded by Mia Farrow and other celebrities behind the Save Darfur Coalition campaign.

By that time, China had invested over \$200 million in the Darfur region to bring 400,000 barrels of oil a day home via 1,000 miles of pipeline from southern Sudan to the Red Sea, but had done nothing to pressure the Sudanese government to stop the human misery in Darfur.

Oil is the key. One-third of China's oil comes from Africa. Outside Sudan, China has pumped \$1.4 billion into oil fields in Angola, Africa's second-largest oil producer. But China's billions don't stop at oil. It's rebuilding Africa's infrastructure, where Western aid is restricted to famine relief and other humanitarian aid. China is also rebuilding roads in Ethiopia and Mozambique and hospitals and schools in Liberia. In addition, China is rebuilding the once magnificent Benguela railway that used to run all the way from the South Atlantic across Africa to the Indian ocean.

Africa is rapidly becoming China's industrial playground, and purely out of self-interest.

That self-interest includes kick-starting Africa's television industry. DISCOP Africa is working closely with Chinese state television and others, said Jucaud. "We have Chinese clients and



After running several newspapers in the U.K. and Eastern Europe, David Short, a longtime VideoAge contributor, has decided to make his new career in Africa.

Russian clients. We have a Chinese partner working for us right now in Beijing."

No prizes for guessing which country might supply cheap televisions to newly grown African couch potatoes. And TV needs electricity, which is in short supply in Africa. Just look at a Google Earth map at night over Africa. Outside South Africa, it really is the dark continent. Who will be supplying and running the electricity stations?

According to Jucaud: "There are already 20 million Chinese in 13 African countries." But however good the prospects look for TV in Africa, there will inevitably be problems. Not everything was rosy in the 1990s in Central Europe. CME and other companies had their problems with local partners taking to the free market with gusto and helping themselves to millions. Nova TV's licence-holder, Vladimir Zelezny, did some time in a Czech jail as a result, and other locals in the region dipped into the till.

Africa is famous for graft and corruption. Jucaud has already had a taste. His first choice of venue was, logically, the Nigerian capital, Lagos. West Africa will see the earliest and fastest growth in the TV business on the continent. It has the greatest population, the biggest economy outside South Africa, and is relatively politically stable.

But, said Jucaud, too many people in Lagos wanted too many bribes. After mulling over Cape Town in South Africa as an alternative, he decided the show should remain in West Africa. So Senegal it is. They speak French there, and Dakar is on the ocean. So in that strange land called Africa, that's at least two familiar things for MIP-goers! ●

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Writers' Strike

(Continued from Cover)

300 producers. Because the 15-week strike started on November 5, 2007 — in the midst of the new TV season development cycle — it was more problematic than the 22-week strike of 1988, which began in August.

Verrone spoke with *VideoAge* the day after the strike about the ups and downs of the negotiations, the future of the TV industry and whether or not the networks are bluffing about scaling back pilot production.

VideoAge International: What did you learn from the negotiations that can be used in the future?

Patric M. Verrone: Something was confirmed for us in the resolution of the strike, which is that negotiating with the AMPTP was unproductive in the extreme and it wasn't until the decision-makers and the CEOs got involved that progress was made. This is reflective of comments that [president and CEO of CBS] Les Moonves made, that in order to avoid this in the future we need to have direct contact with these decision-makers.

VAI: How were negotiations different this year than in the past?

PMV: This time we were not willing to take bad deals. The AMPTP was there to say no, and usually we'd say okay — but not this time. We said no and they didn't have another playbook to turn to.

VAI: Were there any humorous moments

during the strike?

PMV: There was an AMPTP website parody that was very well done and our members made a lot of short films for YouTube that were both satirical and very funny. You had great writers out there who were unable to use their craft and were forced to turn to the Internet. The strike turned into an incubator for people to learn how to make their own Web content.

VAI: Were there any unexpected events?

PMV: Every step of the way is a series of unexpected events during a strike. It was a nice surprise to see [former U.S. presidential candidate] John Edwards and [civil rights activist] Jesse Jackson join us on the picket line along with so many Screen Actors Guild (SAG) members. It was also very disappointing when the late-night talk show hosts were forced back to work.

VAI: What was the most difficult

concession the WGA had to make?

PMV: What was important and heartbreaking for me was our inability to get animation and reality TV covered in our contract.

VAI: Is this issue going to be raised next time?

PMV: What you're going to see is we're going to make progress with these issues between negotiations. Outside negotiations we can enforce our own working rules to get animation and reality TV covered, plus you'll see that there will be animation in new media that we will also cover.

VAI: How will the results of the strike change the industry in the long term?

PMV: The legacy of this strike is going to be the connections that writers developed with new media delivery providers so that they can produce and distribute entertainment outside the traditional conglomerates.

VAI: What effects will the strike have on the upcoming TV season?

PMV: It certainly put it in jeopardy and that's one of the reasons the CEOs entered into negotiations, but there's enough elasticity in our industry that we can make up a lot of ground quickly.

VAI: In 1988 the strike lasted 22 weeks, why was it over faster this time when the stakes were actually higher?

PMV: The imminent or impending loss of the 2007-2008 season as well as the 2008-2009 pilot season and the Academy Awards [i.e. the Oscars] were all considerations. Plus, there comes a point, which was fast upon us, where you can't greenlight a picture if you think that SAG is going strike at the end of June. [SAG's contract expires June 30.] We were planning on handing them the baton in terms of improving on those issues. They still might strike. There is an absolute sense that they are going to fight as hard as we did.

VAI: What do you think of the announcements that some networks will cut back drastically on pilot production?

PMV: Most of those statements were made in the midst of bargaining and they were designed as a bargaining position. Pilot season is their research and development, and drastically reducing would be a self-defeating move.

VAI: So do you think the networks' scaling back will stick?

PMV: I hope not and I doubt it. ●

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The Calm After the Storm. Assessing Post-Strike Damages

Though the bitter negotiating of the writers' union strike is over, the TV industry's new struggles may be just beginning. The Writers Guild of America (WGA) strike against the producers' association came to an end on February 12 when the union officially accepted the contract laid out by the studios. Starting in early November, the strike halted most production in both TV and film for over three months and wreaked financial havoc throughout the industry and the city of Los Angeles in particular. However, in spite of the fact that production has now slowly but surely resumed, writers and studios alike will not be able to breathe a sigh of relief until the long-term industry-wide consequences of the strike become apparent.

By the strike's 15th week, both sides were eager to reach an agreement. The combined threats of the Oscars being cancelled and the 2008 pilot season being compromised pushed the adversaries to end the deadlock. Additionally, had the strike continued through June, when the Screen Actors Guild contract expires, the actors' union promised to officially join the writers on the picket line.

For the most part, the WGA's demands were scaled back to hasten an agreement. The union relinquished its request that animation and reality TV writers be permitted to join the union and also reduced its demands for Internet residuals. In the final agreement, the union was granted a flat rate of about \$1,300 for Internet content and two percent residuals on distribution's gross revenue after a period of two years. The WGA also conceded its appeal for increased DVD residuals.

Production resumed on February 15, a few days after the new contract was ratified. Easy-to-make sitcoms were churning out new episodes in a matter of weeks. NBC's *Saturday Night Live*, which was one of the first series to go dark, led the mass return to the airwaves on February 23. Single camera comedies and dramas take longer to produce than in-studio three-camera comedies, and network executives predict that they will return by early April. For the most part, networks are focusing on completing as many episodes of "hit" series as possible. Shows that are not considered hits will



Twentieth Century Fox's Marion Edwards

take a back seat, and many will not return until the fall.

Though the immediate effects — season delays and cancellations — have been observable, the lasting effects of the strike will take months to unravel. The first sign of long-term fallout hit before the strike even ended, with dramatic announcements from major studios. NBC, ABC and FOX came forward in mid-January to announce extreme cut-backs in the number of pilots they will produce for the upcoming fall season. The following week at NATPE, Jeff Zucker, president and CEO of NBC Universal, explained in his keynote address that, in spite of the lost revenue, his company was taking a positive outlook on the strike and suggested that the strike may have served to "clear the ground for robust growth."

Zucker went on to outline that with its clean slate, NBC plans to restructure its new series development strategy. With the new system, NBC aims to reduce its waste by millions of dollars. In the past, the network has poured cash into as many as 80 pilots, with only about 10 percent making it to air. Of that 10 percent only one or two could be counted as "hits." Beginning this fall, NBC will produce only a handful of pilots, ordering the rest of its line-up directly to air. "This is not about making less programs," said Zucker, "This is about making less waste." Though writers may see the change as a slap in the face after their hard-fought contractual

battle, the networks guarantee that the change is purely a financial decision.

However, despite the money it would save the networks, the new pilot system will take a toll on the writers. Many scribes are skeptical of NBC's plan, claiming that the networks are shooting themselves in the foot by eliminating research and development and are confident that the old system will be back in no time. But if the new system sticks, reducing pilot production by the proposed 90 percent or more would also reduce the number of writers who get a shot at having their shows made. After the shaky start to 2008, with the seemingly interminable strike and compromises in their contract, writers must prepare for yet another blow. Productions has also been accelerated as a precaution against a possible actors' strike. This situation has created a labor crunch which is further exacerbating the new season's developments.

In late February, NBC announced yet another change of approach, this time regarding how it pitches content to advertisers. Rather than the traditional upfront presentation, NBC will now hold an event in which they present their entire 52-week lineup. The aim of the new system is to provide a complete

picture of NBC's scheduling strategy, and take some of the pressure off primetime programming as the biggest draw for advertisers.

Marion Edwards, president of International Television for 20th Century Fox Distribution, agreed that although "it's got to be a good thing to figure out how to not write off 50, 60, 70-thousand dollar pilots," NBC's new strategy is far from being adopted by everyone. Edwards suggested that the future of the industry is, as of now, totally unpredictable and, where development strategies are concerned, it's going to take a lot of trial and error to get it right. "We're in the Wild West at this point," said Edwards, "It's too early to tell what will work and what won't."

While a fail-safe system will take some time to be worked out, studio executives are in agreement on one thing: the pilot system of past years is no longer viable. "We'll all benefit from a more efficient business model," said Edwards. However, she cautioned, ordering seven episodes of a season and watching it fail is not substantially different from the old pilot process. Instead, Edwards suggested that the Internet may be the perfect venue for "incubating" new material, as 20th Century Fox is currently doing with its Web series *Iris Expanding*.

Similarly, as *VideoAge* reported in its front cover story, Patric M. Verrone, president of the WGA West, commented that the legacy of the strike would be the writers' increased competence with do-it-yourself distribution over the Internet. Over the course of the strike, unemployed writers utilized the Internet to showcase their languishing talents. Strike spoofs and viral videos penned by strikers popped up all over the Internet. In his keynote speech at NATPE, Jeff Zucker pointed out that networks need to learn how to better incorporate the Internet and mobile technology into their business plans. Perhaps this is their chance. **ES** ●

KEY POINTS OF THE WRITERS' NEW THREE-YEAR CONTRACT

In its list of initial demands, the WGA wanted to gain jurisdiction of animation and reality TV. But ultimately they had to remove these jurisdictional demands from the negotiations. The WGA will concentrate on organizing these areas outside of contract negotiations.

The writers asked for an increase in DVD residuals, which currently pays them approximately four cents per sale. They were unable to increase the DVD rate in this contract.

The writers initially asked for 2.5 percent of Internet and streaming residuals and changed that to a more fixed formula at the request of media conglomerates. In the new contract, writers will receive a flat residual during the first two years (for a one-hour program, the payment will be \$654 in the first year and \$677 in the second year.) In the third year of the contract, writers will receive two percent of distributions' gross revenue.

The contract recognizes the WGA as the exclusive bargaining representative for writing in new media. It also establishes minimums for writing in new media.

The contract allows for annual salary raises of three to three and a half percent for most writers.

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Lawyers have negotiated a \$203 million settlement against British Airways and Virgin Atlantic Airways after passengers filed a class action suit in the wake of the carriers' alleged participation in anti-competitive behavior over fuel surcharges. The settlement will provide \$144 million for U.K. purchasers and \$59 million for U.S. purchasers who bought tickets from the airlines between August '04 and March '06, when the two carriers exchanged information several times over plans to increase fuel surcharges. Virgin Atlantic eventually notified authorities of the illegal activity — and in doing so escaped a penalty — while BA was fined last August.

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My Two Cents

Just around the time when, at the most recent NATPE, it became known that Howie Mandel, host of the popular NBC network show, *Deal or No Deal*, is Canadian, *VideoAge's* Canadian contributor, Diane Barnes, suggested a story on Canada's comedic talents.

The point of the story — which can be read on page 16, is that in the U.S. there are a disproportionate number of Canadian comics, actors, stand-up comedians and writers.

The question now is: Why do so many remarkably funny people hail from Canada?

And more puzzling: Why do these people become funny only when they cross the border?

Barnes answers the first question with more questions: "Is it something in the snow? Has it got something to do with the canoes they paddle to work? Maybe it's related to all that skiing they do 12 months of the year. Or in which province they were born."

If indeed it has to do with the provinces, the funniest Canadian province has got to be Saskatchewan, where there is a city called Regina, which they pronounce as something that rhymes with vagina.

It is also possible that the expression "having a funny bone" — which indicates a quality of someone entertainingly humorous — came from Canada, when starving artists would ask their rich neighbors in the south to "throw a few bones," and the Americans thought that was funny.

It could also be that Canadians are hybrid creatures: half English, half French, and mercifully mutated into a genetic American-appreciated form. However, those with the English DNA go to Hollywood, and those with the French DNA go to Paris (like Québécoise stand-up comedian Stephane Rousseau). No Canadian comics go to London, possibly because they want to avoid Heathrow airport like the rest of us.

I'm convinced that Canadians say "aboot" instead of "about" only to make us in the U.S. laugh. Indeed, "aboot" is not funny in Canada — only in America does it become hysterical. Take Canadian jokester Jon Lajoie, who, after he was called to Hollywood by United Talent Agency, told *USA Today*, "I really wasn't sure what I was doing [in Canada] was even funny."



Perhaps it's little things that turn everyday people in Canada into funny people when they cross into the U.S. This is why, when then-Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien called president George W. Bush a "cowboy," and his spokesperson, Francoise (nicknamed "Francie" for fun) Ducros, called W. a "moron," the comments weren't funny in Canada. However, they became hysterical in the U.S., to the point that White House staffers started referring to Chrétien as "Dino," which is not as funny as calling him by the Italian slur "Guido" — popularized by NBC's *Saturday Night Live* (produced by Canadian Lorne Michaels). In many respects NBC can be considered the U.S. refugee camp for Canadians.

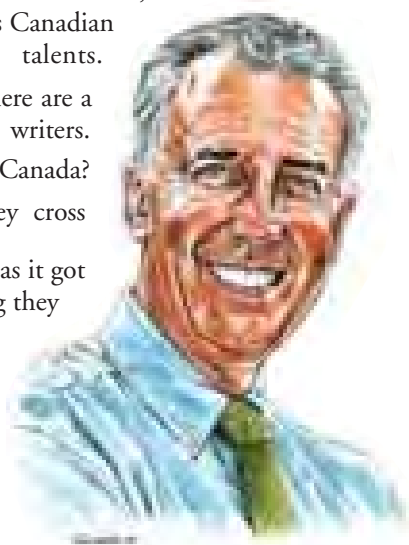
In the *VideoAge* story, Barnes also mentions that Canadian "funny bones" are exported south of the border in increasing numbers, and she attached those "bones" to such talents as Mike Myers, Martin Short and Jim Carrey, just to mention a few.

This situation is alarming for some Republicans, such as presidential hopeless, Mike Huckabee, who was clamoring for better secured borders by pledging to erect more than just cultural barriers. A less drastic alternative that should be considered is an exchange program sponsored by the Republican Party where dull Americans are sent to Canada to reinforce their "funny bones."

And even though no visible sign will be perceived while in Canada, as soon as those "funnyed" Americans return to their Mother Land, comedic juices will start spilling from their pores just like true Canadians who jump the fence. In my view, the fun juice of Canadians cannot get out in temperatures like minus 45 degrees, such as it was in late January in parts of Alberta. But once they go to Hollywood the hot weather plus the warmth and honesty of the people make them drip with funny stuff.

I'm sure that even those annoying Canadian immigration officers — who insist on knowing if, during an afternoon in which you travel from New York to Toronto, you'll be stealing the job of some starving Canadian comedians — will turn into Dan Aykroyd once they visit the U.S. side of Niagara Falls.

The funny part of all of this is that American officials like to keep this invasion of Canadian comedians a secret. Plus, because Canadians make Americans laugh and U.S. president "Dubya" (as they say in Texas) makes Americans cry, the U.S. government doesn't like them. That's why it blames Canada for everything and, in my opinion, ordered CNN commentator Robert Novak to call Canadians a bunch of "weenies," which is really funny.



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